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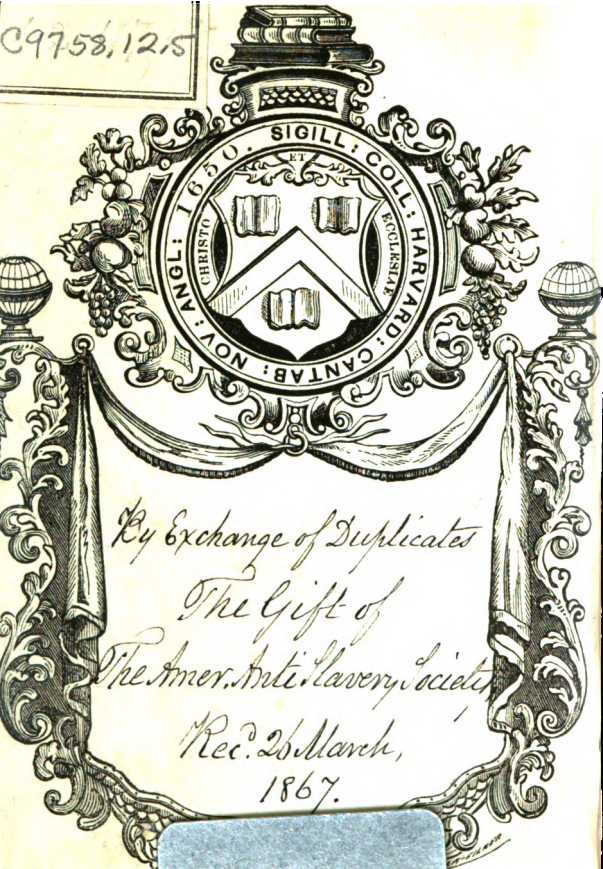
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CONTAINING  
THE CHURCHMAN'S CONFESSION,  
OR AN  
APPEAL TO THE LITURGY.

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BY THE REV. CHARLES SIMEON, M. A.  
Fellow of King's College, Cambridge.

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# SERMON I.

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DEUT. V. 28, 29.

*They have well said all they have spoken: O that there were such an heart in them.*

THE historical parts of the Old Testament are more worthy of our attention than men generally imagine. A multitude of facts recorded in them are replete with spiritual instruction, being intended by God to serve as emblems of those deep mysteries which were afterwards to be revealed. For instance: What is related of our first parent, his creation, his marriage, his sabbatic rest, was emblematic of that new creation which God will produce in us, and of that union with Christ whereby it shall be effected, and of the glorious rest to which it shall introduce us, as well in this world as in the world to come. In like manner the promises made to Adam, to Abraham, and to David, whatever reference they might have to the particular circumstances of those illustrious individuals, had a farther and more important accomplishment in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the second Adam, the promised seed, the King of Israel.

The whole of the Mosaic dispensation was altogether figurative, as we see from the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the figures themselves are illustrated and explained. But there are

some facts which appear too trifling to afford any instruction of this kind. We might expect indeed that so remarkable a fact as the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai should have in it something mysterious; but that the fears of the people on that occasion, and the request dictated by those fears, should be intended by God to convey any particular instruction, we should not have readily supposed; yet by these did God intend to shadow forth the whole mystery of redemption. We are sure that there was somewhat remarkable in the people's speech, by the commendation which God himself bestowed upon it;—still however, unless we have turned our minds particularly to this subject, we shall scarcely conceive how much is contained in it.

The point for our consideration is, *the request which the Israelites made in consequence of the terror with which the display of the divine Majesty had inspired them.* The explication and improvement of that point is all that properly belongs to the passage before us. But we have a further view in taking this text: we propose, after considering it in its true and proper sense, to take it in an improper and accommodated sense; and, after making some observations upon it *in reference to the request which the Israelites then offered*, to notice it *in reference to the requests which we from time to time make unto God in the Liturgy of our Established Church.*

The former view of the text is that which

we propose for our present consideration: the latter will be reserved for future discussion.

The Israelites made an earnest request to God; and God expressed his approbation of it in the words which we have just recited—"They have well said all that they have spoken: O that there were such an heart in them!" From hence we are naturally led to set before you the *sentiments* and *dispositions* which God approves; the *sentiments*; "They have well said all that they have spoken;" the *dispositions*; "O that there were in them such an heart."

1st. The sentiments which he approves.

Here it will be necessary to analyse, as it were, or at least to get a clear and distinct apprehension of, the speech which God commends. It is recorded in the preceding context from the 23d verse. "And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; and ye said, Behold, the Lord our God has shewed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day, that God doth talk with man and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we

have, and lived? Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it and do it." Then it is added, "And the Lord heard the voice of your words when ye spake unto me; and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken."

Now in this speech are contained the following things—An acknowledgment that they could not stand before the Divine Majesty—A desire that God would appoint some one to mediate between him and them; and lastly, An engagement to regard every word that should be delivered to them through a Mediator, with the same obediential reverence, as they would if it were spoken to them by God himself. And these are the sentiments, on which the commendation in our text was unreservedly bestowed.

The first thing then to be noticed is, *Their acknowledgment that they could not stand before the Divine Majesty.*

Many things had now occurred to produce an extraordinary degree of terror upon their minds. There was a blackness and darkness in the sky, such as they never before beheld. This darkness was rendered more visible by the whole adjacent mountain blazing with fire, and by vivid lightnings flashing all around in quick succession. The roaring peals of thunder added an awful solemnity to the scene.

The trumpet sounding with a long and increasingly tremendous blast, accompanied as it was by the mountain shaking to its centre, appalled the trembling multitude; and Jehovah's voice, uttering with inconceivable majesty his authoritative commands, caused even Moses himself to say, I exceedingly fear and quake.\* In consequence of this terrific scene we are told that the people "removed and stood afar off,"† lest the fire should consume them, or the voice of God strike them dead upon the spot.‡ Now though this was in them a mere slavish fear and the request founded upon it had respect only to their temporal safety, yet the sentiment itself was good, and worthy of universal adoption. God being hidden from our senses, so that we neither see nor hear him, we are ready to think lightly of him, and even to rush into his more immediate presence without any holy awe upon our minds: but when he speaks to us in the thunder or by an earthquake, the most hardened rebel is made to feel that "with God is terrible majesty," and that "he is to be had in reverence by all that are round about him." This is a lesson which God has abundantly taught us by his dealings with the Jews.—Among the men of Bethshemesh, a great multitude were slain for their irreverent curiosity in looking into the ark; as Uzzah also afterwards was for his well meant but erroneous zeal in

\*Compare Exod.xix.16—19, with Heb.xli.18—21.

† Exod. xx, 18, 19.

‡ Ver. 21, above cited.

presuming to touch it. The reason of such acts of severity is told us in the history of Nadab and Abihu, who were struck dead for offering strange fire on the altar of their God: they are designed to teach us, "that God will be sanctified in all that come nigh unto him, and before all the people he will be glorified" \*\*

The next thing to be noticed is, *Their desire to have some person appointed who should act as a mediator between God and them.* They probably had respect only to the present occasion; but God interpreted their words as general, and as importing a request that he would send them a permanent Mediator, who should transact all their business, as it were, with God, making known to him their wants, and communicating from him the knowledge of his will. That God did construe their words in this extended sense, we are informed by Moses in a subsequent chapter of this book. In 18th of Deut. and 15th and following verses, this explanation of the matter is given. "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee of thy brethren like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more that, I die not. And the Lord said unto me, they have well spoken that which they

\* Lev. x. 1-3.

*have spoken.* I WILL RAISE THEM UP A PROPHET FROM AMONG THEIR BRETHREN like unto thee, and will put my words in HIS mouth; and HE shall speak unto them all that I command him: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which HE shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." Who *this* Prophet was, we are at no loss to declare; for the apostle Peter, endeavoring to convince the Jews from their own scriptures that Jesus was the Christ, and that Moses himself had required them to believe in him, *cites these very words as referring to Christ*, and calls upon them to regard him as that very Mediator, whom God had sent in answer to the petitions which had been offered by their forefathers at Mount Horeb.\*

Here it should be remembered that we are speaking not from conjecture, but from infallible authority; and that the construction we are putting on the text is, not a fanciful interpretation of our own, but God's own exposition of his own words.

Behold then the sentiment expressed in our text, and the commendation given to it by God himself; it is a sentiment which is the very sum and substance of the whole gospel; it is a sentiment, which whosoever embraces truly, and acts upon it faithfully, can never perish, but shall have eternal life. The preceding sentiment, that we are incapable of standing before an holy God, is good, as introduc-

\* Acts iii. 22, 23.



tory to this; but *this* is the crown of all; this consciousness that we *cannot* come to God and that God *will not* come to us, but through CHRIST. This acquiescence in HIM as the divinely appointed Mediator; his acceptance of him as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" *this sentiment*, I say, God did, and will approve, wheresoever it may be found. The Lord grant that we may all embrace this sentiment as we ought; and that having tasted its sweetness and felt its efficacy, we may attain by means of it all the blessings which a due reception of it will insure!

The third thing to be noticed is, *Their engagement to yield unqualified obedience to every thing that should be spoken to them by the Mediator.*—This, if viewed only as a general promise of obedience, was good, and highly acceptable to God; since the obedience of his creatures is the very end of all his dispensations towards them. It is to bring them to obedience, that he alarms them by the denunciations of his wrath, and encourages them by the promises of his gospel: when once they are brought to love his law, and obey his commandments, all the designs of his love and mercy are accomplished; and nothing remains but that they attain that measure of sanctification, that shall fit them for the glory which he has prepared for them.

But there is far more in this part of our subject than appears at first sight. We will endeavor to enter into it somewhat more minutely

in order to explain what we conceive to be contained in it.

The moral law was never given with a view to men's obtaining salvation by their obedience to it; for it was not possible that they who had transgressed it in any one particular, should afterwards be justified by it. St. Paul says, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."\* But the law could not give life to fallen man: and therefore that way of obtaining righteousness is forever closed. With what view then was the law given? I answer, to shew the existence of sin, and the lost state of man by reason of sin, and to shut him up to that way of obtaining mercy which God has revealed in his gospel. I need not multiply passages in proof of this; two will suffice to establish it beyond a doubt: "As many as are under the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Again, "The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."† But when the law has answered this end, then it has a further use, namely, to make known to us the way in which we should walk. In the first instance we are to flee from it *as a Covenant*, and to seek for mercy through the Mediator: but when we have obtained mercy through the Mediator, then we are to receive the law

\* Gal. iii. 21.

† Gal. iii. 10—24.

at his hands *as a rule of life*, and to render a willing obedience to it. Now all this was shadowed forth in the history before us. God gave Israel his law immediately from his own mouth; and, so given, it terrified them beyond measure, and caused them to desire a Mediator. At the same time they did not express any wish to be liberated from obedience to it; on the contrary they engaged, that, whatever God should speak to them by the Mediator they would listen to it readily, and obey it unreservedly. This was right; and God both approved of it in them, and will approve of it in every child of man. We are afraid of perplexing the subject if we dwell any longer on this branch of it; because it would divert your attention, from the main body of the Discourse. We will therefore content ourselves with citing one passage, wherein the whole is set forth in the precise point of view in which we have endeavoured to place it. We have shewn that the transactions at Mount Sinai, where intended to shadow forth the nature of the two dispensations, that of the law and that of the gospel, in a contrasted view; that the terrific nature of the one made the Israelites desirous to obtain an interest in the other; and that the appointment of Moses to be their Mediator, and to communicate to them the further knowledge of his will with a view to their future obedience, was altogether illustrative of the gospel, which, whilst it teaches us to flee to Christ from the curses of the broken law, requires us afterwards to obey.

that law: in a word, we have shewn, that though as St. Paul expresses it, (we are "without law," considered as a Covenant) we are nevertheless "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ:"\* And all this is set forth in the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the following words: "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words; which voice they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general Assemble and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect and to *Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, and to the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel."†

I would only observe, in order to prevent any misconception of my meaning, that I do not suppose the Israelites to have had a distinct view of these things, such as we have at present, but that they spake like Caiaphas the high-priest, when he said, "It was expedient for one man to die for the people, rather than

\* 1 Cor. ix. 21.      † Heb. xii. 18—24.

that the whole nation should perish:”\* they did not understand the full import of their own words; but God overruled their present feelings so that they spake what was proper to shadow forth the mysteries of his gospel; and he then interpreted their words according to the full and comprehensive sense in which he intended they should be understood.

We could gladly have added somewhat more in confirmation of the sentiments which have been set before you, and particularly as founded on the passage we are considering: but your time forbids it; and therefore we pass on to notice in the

2d place, The *dispositions* which God approves. These must be noticed with a direct reference to the *sentiments* already considered; for God having said, “They have well said all that they have spoken,” adds, “O that there were such an heart in them!”

It is but too common for those desires which arise in the mind under some peculiarly alarming circumstances, to prove only transient, and to yield in a very little time to the rooted inclinations of the heart. This, it is feared, was the case with Israel at that time; and God himself intimated, that the seed which thus hastily sprang up, would soon perish for want of a sufficient root. But the information which we derive from hence is wholly independent of them: whether they cultivated these dispositions or not, we see what dispositions God

\* John xi. 49—52.

approves. It is his wish to find in all of us, *A reverential fear of God—A love to Jesus as our Mediator—and an unfeigned delight in his commands.*

First, he desires to find in us *A reverential fear of God.* That ease, that indifference, that security which men in general indulge, is most displeasing to him. Behold how he addresses men of this description by the prophet Jeremiah: "Hear now this O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes and see not; which have ears and hear not. Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone: neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God."\* Hear too what he says by the prophet Zephaniah: "I will search Jerusalem with candles, and will punish the men that are settled on their lees."† It is thought by many, that, if they commit no flagrant enormity, they have no cause to fear: but, even a heathen when brought to a right mind, saw the folly and impiety of such a conceit, and issued a decree to all the subjects of his realm, that they should all "tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, who is the

\* Jer. v. 21—24.

† Zeph. i. 12.

living God and steadfast forever.”\* Such a state of mind is dreaded, from an idea, that it must of necessity be destructive of all happiness. This however is not true: on the contrary, the more of holy fear we have in our hearts, the happier we shall be. If indeed our fear be only of a slavish kind, it will make us unhappy; but, in proportion as it partakes of filial regard, and has respect to God as a father, it will become a source of unspeakable peace and joy. The testimony of Solomon is, “Happy is the man that feareth always.”† Nor should we shun even the slavish fear, since it is generally the prelude to that which is truly filial, the spirit of bondage is intended to lead us to a spirit of adoption, whereby we may cry Abba, Father.‡ Another ground on which men endeavor to put away the fear of God is, that it argues weakness of understanding and meanness of spirit: but we are told on infallible authority, that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments; his praise endureth forever.§ Permit me then to recommend to you this holy disposition. Learn to “fear that glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD.”|| Stand in awe of his Divine Majesty: and dread his displeasure more than death itself. Bethink yourselves How you shall appear before him in the day of judgment.

\* Dan. vi. 26.

† Prov. xxviii. 14.

‡ Rom. viii. 15.

§ Ps. iii. 10.

¶ Deut. xxviii. 58.

Settle it in your minds, whether you will think as lightly of him when you are standing at his tribunal, with all his terrible Majesty displayed before your eyes, as you are wont to do now that he is hid from your sight. Examine carefully whether you are prepared to meet him, and to receive your final doom at his hands. I well know, that such thoughts are not welcome to the carnal mind: but I know also that they are salutary, yea, and indispensibly necessary too for every child of man. I would therefore adopt the language of the Angel, who flew in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, even to every nation and kindred, and tongue and people; and like him I would say with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come;"\* it is come already in the divine purpose; and it will speedily come to every individual amongst us, and will fix us in an eternity of bliss or woe.

The next disposition which God would have us cultivate, is, *A love to Jesus as our Mediator*. In proportion as we fear God, we shall love the Lord Jesus Christ, who has condescended to mediate between God and us. Were it only that he, like Moses, had revealed to us the will of God in a less terrific way, we ought to love him: but he has done infinitely more for us than Moses could possibly do; he has not only stood between God and us, but has placed

\* Rev. xiv. 6, 7.



himself in our stead, and borne the wrath of God for us. He has not only silenced the thunders of Mount Sinai, but "has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being himself made a curse for us."\* In a word, "he has made reconciliation for us by the blood of his cross;" so that we may now come to God as our Father and our Friend; and may expect at his hands all the blessings of Grace and glory.—"Through him we have access to God," even to his throne: and by faith in him we may even now receive the remission of our sins, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Shall we not then love him? Shall we not honor him? Shall we not employ him in his high office as our Advocate and Mediator? Shall we not glory in him, "and cleave unto him with full purpose of heart?" It was said by the prophet Isaiah, "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.—In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."† O that this prophecy may be fulfilled in us; and that there may henceforth "be in every individual amongst us such an heart!"

Lastly, God would behold in us *An unfeigned delight in his commandments*. This *will be* the fruit, and *must be* the evidence, of our love to Christ: "If ye love me, says our Lord, keep my commandments;"† and again,

\* Gal. iii. 13.

† Isai. xlv. 24, 25.

‡ John xiv. 15.

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."\* Indeed without this, ALL our sentiments or professions are of no avail: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God."†

When persons hear of our being "delivered from the law," and "dead to the law," they feel a jealousy upon the subject of morality, and begin to fear that we open to men the flood gates of licentiousness: but their fears are both unnecessary and unscriptural; for the very circumstance of our being delivered from the law as a covenant of works, is that which most forcibly constrains us to take it as a rule of life. Hear how St. Paul speaks on this subject: "I through the law am dead to the law, *that I might live unto God;*"† and again, "My brethren, ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, *that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*"‡ You perceive then that the liberty to which we are brought by Jesus Christ, has the most friendly aspect imaginable upon the practice of good works, yea rather, that it absolutely secures the performance of them. Whilst therefore we would urge with all possible earnestness a simple affiance in Christ as your Mediator, we would entreat you to receive the commandments at his hands, and to observe them with

† John xiv. 21.

‡ Gal. ii. 19.

\* 1 Cor. vii. 19.

|| Rom. vii. 4.

your whole hearts. Take our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, for instance; study with care and diligence the full import of every precept in it. Do not endeavour to bring down those precepts to your practice, or to the practice of the world around you; but rather strive to elevate your practice to the standard which he has given you. In like manner, take all the precepts contained in the Epistles, and all the holy dispositions which were exercised by the Apostles; and endeavor to emulate the examples of the most distinguished saints. You are cautioned not to be *righteous overmuch*; but remember that you have at least equal need of caution to be *righteous enough*. If only you walk in the steps of our Lord and his Apostles, you need not be afraid of excess; it is an *erroneous kind* of righteousness, against which Solomon would guard you, and not against an *excessive degree* of true holiness; for in true holiness there can be no excess. In this way we may vie with each other, and strive with all our might. St. Paul, says, "This is a faithful saying; and these things I will that thou affirm constantly; that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain (or as the word imports) to excel in good works."\* By these we shall evince the sincerity of our love to Christ; and by these we shall be judged in the last day. I would therefore recommend to every one to ask himself, What is there which I have left undone? What is there which I have done defectively?

\* Titus, iii. 8.

What is there which I have done amiss? What is there that I may do more earnestly for the honor of God, for the good of mankind, and for the benefit of my own soul? O that such a pious zeal pervaded this whole assembly; and "that there were in all of us such an heart!" To those amongst us in whom any good measure of this grace is found, we would say in the language of St. Paul, "We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and *to please God*, so ye would abound more and more."\*

\* 1 Thess. iv. 1.

## SERMON II.

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DEUT. V. 28, 29.

*They have well said all that they have spoken:  
O that there were such an heart in them.*

WHEREVER the word of God admits of a literal interpretation, its primary sense ought to be clearly stated, before any spiritual or mystical application be made of it: but when its literal meaning is ascertained, we must proceed to investigate its hidden import, which is frequently the more important. This has been done in relation to the passage before us; which primarily expresses an approbation of the request made by the Jews, that God would speak to them by the mediation of Moses, and not any longer by the terrific thunders of Mount Sinai; but covertly it conveyed an intimation, that we should all seek deliverance from the curse of the law through the mediation of that great Prophet, whom God raised up like unto Moses, even his Son Jesus Christ.

The further use which we propose to make of this passage, is only in a way of accommodation; which however is abundantly sanctioned by the example of the Apostles; who not unfrequently adopt the language of the Old Testament to convey their own ideas, even when it has no necessary connexion with their subject. Of course, the Liturgy of our Church

was never in the contemplation of the Sacred Historian: yet, as in that we constantly address ourselves to God, and as it is a composition of unrivalled excellence, and needs only the exercise of our devout affections to render it a most acceptable service before God, we may well apply to it the commendation in our text; "They have well said all that they have spoken: O that there were such an heart in them!"

As in the course of the month two other occasions of prosecuting our subject will occur, we shall arrange our observations on the Liturgy, so as to vindicate its use—display its excellence—and commend to your attention one particular part, which we conceive to be eminently deserving notice in this place.

In the present Discourse we shall confine ourselves to the vindication of the Liturgy; first Generally, as a service proper to be used: and then, Particularly, in reference to some objections which are urged against it.

Perhaps there never was any human composition more cavilled at, or less deserving such treatment, than our Liturgy. Nothing has been deemed too harsh to say of it. In order therefore to a *general vindication* of it we propose to shew, that the use of it is *lawful in itself—expedient for us—and acceptable to God.*

*It is lawful in itself.*

The use of a form of prayer cannot be in itself wrong, for, if it had been, God would not have prescribed the use of forms to the Jewish nation. But God did prescribe them on several

occasions. The words which the priest was to utter in blessing the people of Israel, are thus specified: "Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace."\* In like manner, when a man that had been slain was found, inquisition was to be made for his blood; and the elders of the city that was nearest to the body, were to make a solemn affirmation before God that they knew not who the murderer was, and at the same time *in a set form of prayer* to deprecate the divine displeasure.† At the offering of the first-fruits, both at the beginning and end of the service, there were forms of very considerable length, which every offerer was to utter before the Lord.‡

When David brought up the ark from the house of Obed-edom to the tent which he had pitched for it in Jerusalem, he composed a form of prayer and thanksgiving for the occasion, selected out of four different Psalms,|| and put it into the hand of Asaph and his brethren for the use of the whole congregation. In all following ages the Psalms were used as forms of devotion: Hezekiah appointed them for that

\* Numb. vi. 23—26. † Deut. xxi. 7, 8.

‡ Deut. xxvi. 3, 5—10, 13—15.

|| Compare 1 Chron. xvi. 7—36, with Ps. cv. 1—15, and xcvi. 1—13, and cxxxvi. 1 and cvi. 47, 48.

purpose when he restored the worship of God which had been suspended and superseded in the days of Ahaz;\* as did Ezra also at the laying of the foundation of the second temple.† Nay, the Hymn which our blessed Lord sang with his disciples immediately after he had instituted his Supper, as the memorial of his death,‡ was either taken from the Psalms, from 113th to 118th inclusive, or else was a particular form composed for that occasion. All this sufficiently shews that forms of devotion are not evil in themselves. But some think, that though they were not evil under the Jewish dispensation, which consisted altogether of rites and carnal ordinances, they are evil under the more spiritual dispensation of the Gospel. This however cannot be: because our blessed Lord taught his disciples a form of prayer, and not only told them to pray *after that manner*, as one Evangelist mentions, but to *use the very words*, as another Evangelist declares. Indeed the Greek word, by which St. Matthew expresses it, is not of necessity to be confined to manner;|| it *might* be taken as referring to the very words: but, granting that he speaks of the manner only, and prescribes it as a model; yet St. Luke certainly requires us to use it as a form: "Jesus said unto them, *When ye pray, say*, Our Father which art in heaven."§ Accordingly we find, from the testimonies of some

\*2 Chron. xxix. 30

†Ezra iii. 10, 11.

‡Matt. xxvi. 30.

||Matt. vi. 9.

§Luke xi. 2.



of the earliest and most eminent Fathers of the Church,\* that it was constantly regarded and used in the Church as a form from the very times of the Apostles. As for the objection, that we do not read in the New Testament that it was so used, it is of no weight at all; for we are not told that the Apostles ever baptised persons in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; but can we therefore doubt whether they did use this form of baptism? Assuredly not; and therefore the circumstance of such an use of the Lord's Prayer not being recorded, especially in so short a history as that of the Apostles, is no argument at all that it was not so used.

Nor was this the only form used in the apostolic age. Lucian, speaking of the first Christians, says, "They spend whole nights in singing of Psalms;" and Pliny, in his famous Letter to Trajan, which was written not much above ten years after the death of John the Evangelist, says of them, "It is their manner to sing by turns a hymn to Christ as God." This latter it should seem, was not a Psalm of David, but a hymn composed for the purpose: and it proves indisputably, that even in the apostolic age, forms of devotion were in use. If we come down to the times subsequent to the Apostles, we shall find Liturgies composed for the service of the different Churches. The Liturgies

\*Tertullian—Cyprian—Cyril—Jerome—Augustine—Chrysostom—Gregory. See Bennet's *London, Cases*, p. 52.

of St. Peter, St. Mark, and St. James, though they were corrupted in later ages, are certainly of high antiquity: that of St. James was of great authority in the Church in the days of Cyril, who in his younger years, at the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century, wrote a Comment upon it. And it were easy to trace the use of them from that time even to the present day. Shall it be said then, that the use of a pre-composed form of prayer is not lawful? Would God have given so many forms under the Jewish dispensation; and would our blessed Lord have given a form for the use of his Church and people, if it had not been lawful to use a form? But it is worthy of observation, that those who most loudly decry the use of forms, do themselves use forms, whenever they unite in public worship. What are hymns, but forms of prayer and praise? and if it be lawful to worship God in forms of verse, is it not equally so in forms of prose? We may say therefore, our adversaries themselves being judges, that the use of a form of prayer is lawful.

As for those passages of Scripture which are supposed to hold forth an expectation that under the Gospel we should have ability to pray without a form; for instance, that "God would give us a spirit of grace and of supplication," and that the Spirit should help our infirmities and teach us what to pray for as we ought;" they do not warrant us to expect, that we shall be enabled to speak by inspiration, as the Apostles did, but

that our hearts should be disposed for prayer, and be enabled to enjoy near and intimate communion with God in that holy exercise; but they may be fulfilled to us as much in the use of a pre-composed form, as in any extemporaneous effusions of our own: and it is certain, that persons may be very fluent in the expressions of prayer without the smallest spiritual influence upon their minds; and that they may, on the other hand, be very fervent in prayer, though the expressions be already provided to their hand: and consequently, the promised assistance of the Spirit is perfectly consistent with the use of prayers that have been pre-composed.

But the lawfulness of forms of prayer is in this day pretty generally conceded, many however still question their expediency. We proceed therefore to shew next, that the use of the Liturgy is *expedient for us*.

Here let it not be supposed that I am about to condemn those who differ from us in judgment or in practice. The Legislature has liberally conceded to all the subjects of the realm a right of choice; and God forbid that any one should wish to abridge them of it, in a matter of such high concern as the worship of Almighty God. If any think themselves more edified by extempore prayer, we rejoice that their souls are benefited, though it be not precisely in our way; but still we cannot be insensible to the advantages which we enjoy; and much less can we concede to any that the use of a

prescribed form of prayer is the smallest disadvantage.

We say then that the Liturgy was of great use *at the time it was made*. At the commencement of the Reformation, the most lamentable ignorance prevailed throughout the land; and even those who from their office ought to have been well instructed in the Holy Scriptures, themselves needed to be taught what were the first principles of the oracles of God. If then the pious and venerable Reformers of our Church had not provided a suitable form of prayer the people would still in many thousands of parishes have remained in utter darkness; but by the diffusion of this sacred light throughout the land, every part of the kingdom became in a good measure irradiated with scriptural knowledge and with saving truth. The few who were enlightened, might indeed have scattered some partial rays around them; but their light would have been only as a meteor, that passes away and leaves no permanent effect. Moreover, if their zeal and knowledge and piety had been suffered to die with them, we should have in vain sought for compositions of equal excellence from any set of governors from that day to the present hour: but by conveying to posterity the impress of their own piety in stated forms of prayer, they have in them transmitted a measure of their own spirit, which like Elijah's mantle, has descended on multitudes who have succeeded them in their high office. It is not possible to form a correct esti-

mate of the benefit which we at this day derive from having such a standard of piety in our hands; but we do not speak too strongly if we say, that the most enlightened amongst us, of whatever denomination they may be, owe much to the existence of our Liturgy; which has been, as it were, the pillar and ground of the truth in this kingdom, and has served as fuel to perpetuate the flame, which the Lord himself, at the time of the Reformation, kindled upon our altars.

But we must go further, and say, that the use of the Liturgy is *equally expedient still*. Of course, we must not be understood as speaking of private prayer in the closet; where though a young and inexperienced person may get help from written forms, it is desirable that every one should learn to express his own wants in his own language; because no written prayer can enter so minutely into his wants and feelings as he himself may do; but in public, we maintain, that the use of such a form as ours is still as expedient as ever. To lead the devotions of a congregation in extempore prayer is a work for which but few are qualified. An extensive knowledge of the Scriptures must be combined with fervent piety, in order to fit a person for such an undertaking: and I greatly mistake if there be found an humble person in the world, who, after engaging often in that arduous work, does not wish at times that he had a suitable form prepared for him. That the constant repetition of the same form does not

so forcibly arrest the attention as new sentiments and expressions would do, must be confessed: but, on the other hand, the use of a well composed form secures us against the dry, dull, tedious repetitions which are but too frequently the fruits of extemporaneous devotions. Only let any person be in a devout frame, and he will be far more likely to have his soul elevated to heaven by the Liturgy of the Established Church, than he will by the generality of prayers which he would hear in other places of worship; and, if any one complain that he cannot enter into the spirit of them, let him only examine his frame of mind when engaged in extemporaneous prayers, whether in public, or in his own family; and he will find, that his formality is not confined to the service of the Church, but is the sad fruit and consequence of his own weakness and corruption.

Here it may not be amiss to rectify the notions which are frequently entertained of spiritual edification. Many, if their imaginations are pleased, and their spirits elevated, are ready to think, that they have been greatly edified; and this error is at the root of that preference which they give to extempore prayer, and the indifference which they manifest towards the prayers of the Established Church. But real edification consists in humility of mind, and in being led to a more holy and consistent walk with God; and one atom of such a spirit is more valuable than all the animal fervour that ever was excited. It is with *solid truths*, and not

with *fluent words*, that we are to be impressed; and if we can desire from our hearts the things which we pray for in our public forms, we need never regret, that our fancy was not gratified, or our animal spirits raised, by the delusive charms of novelty.

In what we have spoken on this subject it must be remembered, that we have spoken only in a way of vindication: the true, the exalted, and the proper ground for a Member and Minister of the Established Church, we have left for the present untouched, lest we should encroach upon that, which we hope to occupy on a future occasion. But it remains for us yet further to remark, that the use of our Liturgy is *acceptable to God*.

The words of our text are sufficient to shew us that God does not look at fine words and fluent expressions, but at the heart. The Israelites had "well said all that they had spoken:" but whilst God acknowledged that, he added, "O that there were such *an heart* in them!" If there be humility and contrition in our supplications, it will make no difference with God whether they be extemporaneous or pre-composed. Can any one doubt whether, if we were to address our heavenly Father in the words which Christ himself has taught us, we should be accepted of him, provided we uttered the different petitions from our hearts? As little doubt then is there that in the use of the Liturgy also we shall be accepted, if only we draw nigh to God with our hearts as well as with our lips.

The prayer of faith, whether with or without a form, shall never go forth in vain. And there are thousands at this day who can attest from their own experience, that they have often found God as present with them in the use of the public services of our Church, as ever they did in their secret chambers.

Thus we have endeavoured to vindicate the use of our Liturgy *generally*. We now come to vindicate it in reference to some particular objections that have been urged against it.

The objections may be comprised under two heads; namely, That there are exceptionable expressions in the Liturgy; and, That the use of it necessarily generates formality.

To notice all the expressions which captious men have cavilled at, would be a waste of time. But there are one or two which with tender minds have considerable weight, and have not only prevented many worthy men from entering into the church, but do at this hour press upon the consciences of many, who in all other things approve and admire the public formularies of our church. A great portion of this present assembly are educated with a view to the ministry in the establishment; and if I may be able in any little measure to satisfy their minds, or to remove a stumbling-block out of their way, I shall think that I have made a good use of the opportunity which is thus afforded me. A more essential service I can scarcely render unto any of my younger brethren, or indeed to the Establishment itself, than



by meeting fairly the difficulties which occur to their minds, and which are too often successfully urged by the enemies of our church, to the embarrassing of conscientious minds, and to the drawing away of many, who might have laboured comfortably and successfully in this part of our Lord's vineyard.

There is one circumstance in the formation of our Liturgy which is not sufficiently adverted to. The persons who composed it were men of a truly Apostolic spirit; unhampered by party prejudices, they endeavoured to speak in all things precisely as the Scriptures speak; they did not indulge in speculations and metaphysical reasonings; nor did they presume to be wise above what is written: they laboured to speak the truth, the whole truth in love: and they cultivated in the highest degree that candour, that simplicity, and that charity, which so eminently characterised all the Apostolic writings. Permit me to call your attention to this particular point, because it will satisfactorily account for those expressions which seem most objectionable; and will shew precisely in what view we may most conscientiously repeat the language they have used.

In our Burial Service we thank God for delivering our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world, and express a sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, together with a hope also that our departed brother

rests in Christ.\* Of course, it often happens, that we are called to use these expressions over persons, who, there is reason to fear, have died in their sins; and then the question is, How we can with propriety use them? I answer, that even according to the letter of the words, the use of them may be justified; because we speak not of *his*, but of *the* resurrection to eternal life; and because, where we do not absolutely know that God has *not* pardoned a person, we may entertain *some* measure of hope that he *has*. But, taking the expressions more according to the spirit of them, they precisely accord with what we continually read in the Epistles of St. Paul. In the First Epistle to the Corinthian church, he says of them, "I thank my God always on your behalf, that in every thing ye are enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that *ye come behind in no gift*, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."† Yet, does he instantly begin to

\*The Burial Service in the Liturgy of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the United States of America, is altered in the parts here quoted. Instead of offering "thanks that it hath pleased God to deliver our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world;" the collect in the Burial Service of the American Liturgy, stands thus—"We give thee hearty thanks for the good examples of all those thy servants, who, having finished their course in faith, do now rest from their labours." And the use of this collect is left at the discretion of the minister. Instead of the words "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life;" the following are used in the Burial Service of the American church—"looking for the general resurrection at the last day, and the life of the world to come." [Am. Ed.]

† 1 Cor. i. 4-7.

condemn the same persons for their divisions and contentions; and afterwards tells them that they were carnal, and walked, not as saints but as men,"\* that is, as unconverted and ungodly men. In like manner, in his Epistle to the Philippians, after saying, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," he adds "Even as it is meet for me to think this of you *all*;"† Yet does he afterwards caution these very persons against strife, and vain-glory, and self-love; and tell them that he will send Timothy to them shortly, in order to make inquiries into their state, and to give him information respecting them; and he even mentions two by name, Euodias and Syntyche, whose notorious disagreements he was desirous to heal.

A multitude of other passages might be cited to the same effect; to shew that the Apostles, in a spirit of candour and of love, spoke in terms of commendation respecting all, when in strictness of speech they should have made some particular exceptions. And, if we at this day were called to use the same language under the very same circumstances, it is probable that many would feel scruples respecting it, and especially, *in thanking God* for things, which, if pressed to the utmost meaning of the words, might not be strictly true. But surely,

\* 1 Cor. iii. 3.

† Phil. i. 3—7.

*if the Apostles in a spirit of love and charity used such language, we may safely and properly do the same: and knowing in what manner, and with what views, they spake, we need not hesitate to deliver ourselves with the same spirit and in the same latitude as they.\**

In the baptismal Service we thank God for having regenerated the baptized infant by his Holy Spirit. Now from hence it appears that in the opinion of our Reformers, regeneration and remission of sins did accompany baptism. But in what sense did they hold this sentiment? Did they maintain that there was no need for the seed then sown in the heart of the baptized person to grow up, and to bring forth fruit; or that he could be saved in any other way than by a progressive renovation of his soul after the Divine image † Had they asserted or counten-

\*To guard against a misapprehension of his meaning, the Author wishes these words to be distinctly noticed; because they contain the whole drift of his argument. He does not mean to say, that the Apostles ascribed salvation to the *opus operatum*, the outward act of baptism; or, that they intended to assert distinctly the salvation of every individual who had been baptized; but only that in reference to these subjects, they did use a language very similar to that in our Liturgy, and that therefore our Reformers were justified, as we also are, in using the same.

†In proof of the correctness of this sentiment, it may be observed that the church evidently distinguishes between *regeneration* and *renovation*. She considers *regeneration* as that change of spiritual state or condition, which takes place in *baptism*: and *renovation*, as a change of heart and life, by the influences of the Holy Spirit. This change, Mr. Simeon describes as a "progressive renovation of the soul after the divine image.

The distinction between *regeneration* and *renovation*, is expressly noted in the collect for Christmas day; in which

anced any such doctrine as that, it would have been impossible for any enlightened person to concur with them. But nothing can be conceived more repugnant to their sentiments than such an idea as this: so far from harbouring such a thought, they have, and that too in this very prayer, taught us to look unto God for that total change both of heart and life, which, long since their days, has begun to be expressed by the term, *regeneration*. After thanking God for regenerating the infant by his Holy Spirit, we are taught to pray, "that he, being dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness may crucify the old man, and *utterly abolish the whole body of sin*:" and then declaring that total change to be the necessary mean of his obtain-

the church directs her members to pray, "grant that we, being *regenerated*, may daily be *renewed* by thy Holy Spirit." The *primitive fathers* uniformly preserve this distinction, and call baptism the "laver of regeneration."

The distinction is founded on *scripture*. The Apostle in the epistle to Titus, (ch. iii. ver. 5.) speaks of "the washing of *regeneration*," evidently meaning baptism, and "the *renewing* of the Holy Ghost."

Following *scripture* and *primitive authority*, the church therefore very properly applies the term *regeneration* to baptism; in which sacrament that change takes place in our *spiritual state or condition*, which the term describes. Thus the baptismal offices, and the office of confirmation speak of every baptised person "as being *regenerate*." The catechism, in reference to baptism, declares, that "being by nature born in sin, and the *children of wrath*, we are *hereby*," (by baptism) "*made the children of grace*." The baptised person is taught to profess, in the catechism, that in baptism, on the conditions of repentance and faith he was made "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." And in the same admirable summary of christian instruction, he is taught to "thank his heavenly Father who hath called him to this *state of salvation*."

ing salvation, we add, "*So that finally, with the residue of thy holy Church he may be an inheritor of thine everlasting kingdom?*" Is there I would ask, any person that can require more than this? or does God in his word require more? There are two things to be noticed in reference to this subject; the *term*, Regeneration, and the *thing*. The *term* occurs but twice in the Scriptures; in one place it refers to baptism, and is distinguished from the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which however is represented as attendant on it; and in the other place it has a totally distinct meaning unconnected with the subject. Now the *term* they use, as the Scripture uses it; and the *thing* they require, as strongly as any person can require it. They do not give us any reason to imagine that an adult person can be saved without experiencing all that modern Divines have included in the term Regenera-

But, as Mr. Simeon justly maintains, the church enforces a change of heart and life as essential to securing the privileges of baptism. The baptised person, she teaches, must "die to sin, and rise again unto righteousness;" must crucify the old man and utterly abolish the whole body of sin;" and must "continually mortify all his evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceed in all virtue and Godliness of living;" in other words; he must be renewed by the Holy Spirit.

It is much to be lamented that many divines of the church of England, have not attended to this distinction between regeneration and renovation; and apply the former term to that change of heart and life, which the reformers of the church, agreeably to scripture and the primitive Fathers, denoted by the term, renovation. Mr. Simeon very properly observes, that "the total change of heart and life, long since the days of the Reformers, began to be expressed by the term regeneration." [Am. Ed.]

tion: on the contrary they do, both there and throughout the whole Liturgy insist upon the necessity of a radical change both of heart and life. Here then, the only question is, not whether a baptized person can be saved by that ordinance without sanctification; but whether God does always accompany the sign with the thing signified? Here is certainly room for difference of opinion; but it cannot be positively decided in the negative, because we cannot know, or even judge, respecting it in any instance whatever, except by the fruits, that follow: and therefore in all fairness it may be considered only as a doubtful point: and, if we appeal, as we ought to do, to the holy Scriptures, they certainly do in a very remarkable way accord with the expressions in our Liturgy. St. Paul says, "By one Spirit are we *all* baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been *all* made to *drink into one Spirit*:" and this he says of all the *visible* members of Christ's body.\* Again, speaking of the whole nation of Israel, infants as well as adults, he says, "They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did *all* eat the same *spiritual* meat, and did *all* drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that *spiritual* rock that followed them; and *that rock was Christ*." (1 Cor. x. 1—4.) Yet behold, in the very next verse he tells us, that "with many of them God was displeased, and overthrew

\* 1 Cor. xii. 13. 27.

them in the wilderness." In another place he speaks yet more strongly still: "As many of you, says he, as are baptized into Christ, *have put on Christ*;" (Gal. iii. 27.) Here we see what is meant by the expression, "baptized into Christ;" it is precisely the same expression as that before mentioned, of the Israelites being "baptized unto Moses;" (the Greek preposition used in both places is the same,) it includes all that had been initiated into his religion by the rite of baptism: and of them universally does the Apostle say, "*They have put on Christ*." Now I ask, Have not the persons who scruple the use of that prayer in the baptismal service, equal reason to scruple the use of these different expressions?

Again—St. Peter says, Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins; (Acts ii. 38, 39.) and in another place, "Baptism doth now save us:" (1 Pet. iii. 21.) And speaking elsewhere of baptized persons who were unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, he says, "He hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."\* Does not this very strongly countenance the idea which our Reformers entertained, That the remission of our sins, as well as the regeneration of our souls, is an attendant on the baptismal rite? Perhaps it will be said, that the inspired Writers spake of persons who had been baptized at an adult age. But, if they did so in some places they certainly did not in others; and, where



they did not, they must be understood as comprehending all, whether infants or adults: and therefore the language of our Liturgy, which is not a whit stronger than theirs, may be both subscribed and used without any just occasion of offence.

Let me then speak the truth before God: Though I am no Arminian, I do think that the refinements of Calvin have done great harm in the church: they have driven multitudes from the plain, and popular way of speaking used by the inspired writers, and have made them unreasonably and unscripturally squeamish in their modes of expression; and I conceive that, the less addicted any person is to systematic accuracy, the more he will accord with the inspired writers, and the more he will approve of the views of our Reformers. I do not mean however to say, that a slight alteration in two or three instances would not be an improvement; since it would take off a burthen from many minds, and supersede the necessity of laboured explanations: but I do mean to say, that there is no such objection to these expressions as to deter any conscientious person from giving his unfeigned assent and consent to the Liturgy altogether, or from using the particular expressions which we have been endeavouring to explain.

The other objection is, that the use of a Liturgy necessarily generates formality.

We have before acknowledged that the repetition of a form is less likely to arrest the at-

tention than that which is novel; but we by no means concede that it necessarily generates formality; on the contrary we affirm, that, if any person come to the service of the church with a truly spiritual mind, he will find in our Liturgy what is calculated to call forth the devoutest exercises of his mind far more than in any of the extemporaneous prayers which he would hear in other places.

We forbear to enter into a fuller elucidation of this point at present, because we should detain you too long, and we shall have a better opportunity of doing it in our next Discourse. But we would here intreat you all so far to bear this objection in your minds, as to cut off all occasion for it as much as possible, and, by the devout manner of your attendance on the services of the Church, to shew, that though you worship God with a form, you also worship him in spirit and in truth. Dissenters themselves know that the repetition of favourite hymns does not generate formality; and they may from thence learn that the repetition of our excellent Liturgy is not really open to that objection. But they will judge from what they see amongst us: If they see that the prayers are read amongst us without any devotion, and that those who hear them, are inattentive and irreverent during the service, they will not impute these evils to the true and proper cause, but to the Liturgy itself; and it is a fact that they do from this very circumstance derive great advantage for the weakening of

men's attachment to the Established Church, and for the augmenting of their own societies. Surely then it becomes us who are annually sending forth so many ministers into every quarter of the land, to pay particular attention to this point. I am well aware that where such multitudes of young men are, it is not possible so to controul the inconsiderateness of youth, as to suppress all levity, or to maintain that complete order that might be wished; but I know also that the ingenuousness of youth is open to conviction upon a subject like this, and that even the strictest discipline upon a point so interwoven with the honour of the Establishment and the eternal interests of their own souls, would, in a little time, meet with a more cordial concurrence than is generally imagined: it would commend itself to their consciences, and call forth, not only their present approbation, but their lasting gratitude: and if those who are in authority amongst us would lay this matter to heart, and devise means for the carrying it into full effect, more would be done for the upholding of the Establishment, than by ten thousand discourses in vindication of it: and verily, if but the smallest progress should be made in it, I should think that I had "not laboured in vain or run in vain."

But let us not so think of the Establishment as to forget our own souls: for after all, the great question for the consideration of us all is, Whether we ourselves are accepted in the use of these prayers? And here, it is not out-

ward reverence and decorum that will suffice; the heart must be engaged, as well as the lips. It will be to little purpose that God say respecting us, "They have well said all that they have spoken," unless he see his own wish also accomplished, "O that there were in them such an heart!" Indeed our prayers will be no more than a solemn mockery, if there be not a correspondence between the words of our lips and the feeling of our own souls: and his answer to us will be, like that to the Jews of old, "Ye hypocrites, in vain do you worship me." Let all of us then bring our devotions to this test, and look well to it, that, with "the form we have also the power of godliness." We are too apt to rush into the Divine presence without any consciousness of the importance of the work in which we are going to be engaged, or any fear of his Majesty, whom we are going to address. If we would prevent formality in the house of God, we should endeavour to carry thither a devout spirit along with us, and guard against the very first incursion of vain thoughts and foolish imaginations. Let us then labour to attain such a sense of our own necessities and of God's unbounded goodness, as shall produce a fixedness of mind, whenever we draw nigh to God in prayer; and for this end, let us ask of God the gift of his Holy Spirit to help our infirmities: and let us never think that we have used the Liturgy to any good purpose, unless it bring into our bosoms an inward witness of its utility, and a reasonable evidence of our acceptance with God in the use of it.

## SERMON III.

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DEUT. V. 28, 29.

*They have well said all that they have spoken :  
O that there were such an heart in them.*

IN our preceding discourses on this text, we first entered distinctly and fully into its true import, and then applied it, in an accommodated sense, to the Liturgy of our Established Church. The utility of a Liturgy being doubted by many, we endeavoured to vindicate the use of it, as lawful in itself, expedient for us, and acceptable to God. But it is not a mere vindication only which such a composition merits at our hands: the labour bestowed upon it has been exceedingly great; Our first reformers omitted nothing that could conduce to the improvement of it: they consulted the most pious and learned of foreign Divines, and submitted it to them for their correction; and, since their time there have been frequent revisions of it, in order that every expression which could be made a subject of cavil, might be amended; by which means it has been brought to such a state of perfection, as no human composition of equal size and variety can pretend to.

To display its excellence is the task, which agreeably to the plan before proposed, is now assigned us; and we enter upon it with pleasure; in the hope, that those who have never yet

studied the Liturgy, will learn to appreciate its value, and that all of us may be led to a more thankful and profitable use of it in future.

To judge of the Liturgy aright, we should contemplate *Its spirituality and purity—Its fulness and suitableness—Its moderation and candour.*

1st. Its spirituality and purity.

It is well known that the services of the Church of Rome, from whose communion we separated, were full of superstition and error: they taught the people to rest in carnal ordinances, without either stimulating them to real piety, or establishing them on the foundation which God has laid. They contained, it is true, much that was good; but they were at the same time so filled with ceremonies of man's invention, and with doctrines repugnant to the Gospel, that they tended only to deceive and ruin all who adhered to them. In direct opposition to those services we affirm, that the whole scope and tendency of our Liturgy is to raise our minds to a holy and heavenly state, and to build us up upon the Lord Jesus Christ as the only foundation of a sinner's hope.

Let us look at the *stated* services of our church; let us call to mind all that we have heard or uttered, from the introductory sentences which were to prepare our minds, to the Dismission Prayer which closes the whole; there is nothing for shew, but all for edification and spiritual improvement. Is humility the foundation of true piety? What deep hu-

miliation is expressed in the General Confession, and throughout the Litany, as also in supplicating forgiveness after every one of the Commandments, for our innumerable violations of them all! Is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the way appointed for our reconciliation with God? We ask for every blessing solely in his name and for his sake; and with the holy vehemence of importunity, we urge with him the consideration of all that he has done and suffered for us, as our plea for mercy; and, at the Lord's Supper, we mark so fully our affiance in his atoning blood, that it is impossible for any one to use those prayers aright, without seeing and feeling that "there is no other name under heaven but his, whereby we can be saved."

The same we may observe respecting the *occasional* services of our Church. From our very birth even to the grave, our Church omits nothing that can tend to the edification of its members. At our first introduction into the Church, with what solemnity are we dedicated to God in our Baptismal Service! What pledges does our Church require of our Sponsors that we shall be brought up in the true faith and fear of God: and how earnestly does she lead us to pray for a progressive, total, and permanent renovation of our souls? No sooner are we capable of receiving instruction, than she provides for us, and expressly requires that we be well instructed in, a Catechism, so short that it burthens the memory of none, and so com-

prehensive that it contains all that is necessary for our information at that early period of our life. When once we are taught by that to know the nature and extent of our baptismal vows, the Church calls upon us to renew in our own person the vows that were formerly made for us in our name; and, in a service specially prepared for that purpose, leads us to consecrate ourselves to God; thus endeavouring to *confirm* us in our holy resolutions, and to establish us in the faith of Christ. Not content with having thus initiated, instructed, and confirmed her members in the religion of Christ, the Church embraces every occasion of instilling into our minds the knowledge and love of his ways. If we change our condition in life, we are required to come to the altar of our God, and there devote ourselves afresh to him, and implore his blessing, from which alone all true happiness proceeds. Are mercies and deliverances vouchsafed to any, especially that great mercy of preservation from the pangs and perils of child birth? the Church appoints a public acknowledgment to be made to Almighty God in the presence of the whole congregation, and provides a suitable service for that end. In like manner, for every public mercy, or in time of any public calamity, particular prayers and thanksgivings are provided for our use. In a time of sickness there is also very particular provision made for our instruction and consolation; and even after death, when she can no more benefit the deceased, the Church labours to promote



the benefit of her surviving members, by a service the most solemn and impressive that ever was formed. Thus attentive is she to supply in every thing, as far as human endeavours can avail, our spiritual wants; being decent in her forms, but not superstitious; and strong in her expressions, but not erroneous. In short it is not possible to read the Liturgy with candour, and not to see that the welfare of our souls is the one object of the whole; and that the compilers of it had nothing in view, but that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in God, we should glorify his holy Name.

The excellencies of our Liturgy will yet further appear while we notice, next, *its fulness and suitableness.*

Astonishing is the wisdom with which the Liturgy is adapted to the edification of every member of the Church. There is no case that is overlooked, no sin that is not deplored, no want that is not specified, no blessing that is not asked: yet, whilst every particular is entered into so far that every individual person may find his own case adverted to, and his own wishes expressed, the whole is so carefully worded, that no person is led to express more than he ought to feel, or to deliver sentiments in which he may not join with his whole heart. Indeed there is a minuteness in the petitions that is rarely found even in men's private devotions; and those very particularities are founded in the deepest knowledge of the human heart, and the completest view of men's spirit-

tial necessities; for instance, We pray to God to deliver us, not only in all time of our tribulation, but *in all time of our wealth also*;\* because we are quite as much in danger of being drawn from God by prosperity, as by adversity; and need his aid as much in the one as in the other.

In the intercessory part of our devotions also, our sympathy is called forth in behalf of all orders and degrees of men, under every name, and every character that can be conceived. We pray to him to strengthen *such as do stand*, to comfort and help *the weak hearted*, and to raise up *them that fall*, and finally, to beat down Satan under our feet. We intreat him also to succour, help, and comfort *all that are in danger, necessity, and tribulation*. We further supplicate him in behalf of *all that travel* whether *by land or water*, all *women labouring of child*,† all *sick persons*, and *young children*, and particularly intreat him to have pity upon all *prisoners and captives*. Still further, we plead with him to defend and provide for the *fatherless children*, and *widows*, and *all that are desolate and oppressed*; and, lest any should have been omitted, we beg him "to have mercy upon *all men*," generally, and more particularly "to forgive our *enemies, persecutors, and slanderers*, and to turn their hearts." In what other prayers, whether extemporaneous

\*"*In all time of our prosperity*;" in the American Liturgy. *Am. Ed.*

†"*All women in the perils of child-birth*," in the American Liturgy. *Am. Ed.*

or written, shall we ever find such diffusive benevolence as this?

In a word, there is no possible situation in which we can be placed, but the prayers are precisely suited to us; nor can we be in any frame of mind wherein they will not express our feelings as strongly and forceably, as any person could express them even in his secret chamber. Take a broken-hearted penitent; where can he ever find words, wherein to supplicate the mercy of his God, more congenial with his feelings than in the Litany, where he renews his application to each person of the Sacred Trinity for mercy, under the character of a miserable sinner? Hear him when kneeling before the altar of his God. "Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men, we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burthen of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father: for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of life, to the honour and glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord." I may venture to say that no finite wisdom could suggest words

more suited to the feelings or necessities of a penitent, than these.

Take, next, a person full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and if he were the devoutest of all the human race, he could never find words wherein to give scope to all the exercises of his mind more suitable than in the *Te Deum*; "We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting. To thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens, and all the powers therein: To thee Cherubin and Seraphin continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth: Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of thy glory." Hear him also at the table of the Lord. "It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, Almighty, everlasting God, Therefore with angels, and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee, and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory; glory be to thee, O Lord most high."

Even where there are no particular exercises of the mind, the Liturgy is calculated to produce the greatest possible good: for the gravity and sobriety of the whole service are fitted to impress the most careless sinner; whilst the various portions of Scripture that are read out of the Old and New Testament, not only for the Lessons of the day, but from the Psalms al-

so, and from the Epistles and Gospels, are well adapted to arrest the attention of the thoughtless and to convey instructions to the most ignorant. Indeed I consider it as one of the highest excellencies of our Liturgy, that it is calculated to make us wise, intelligent, and sober Christians; it marks a golden mean; it affects and inspires a meek, humble, modest, sober piety, equally remote from the coldness of a formalist, the self-importance of a systematic dogmatist, and the unhallowed fervour of a wild enthusiast. *A tender seriousness, a meek devotion and an humble joy*, are the qualities which it was intended, and is calculated, to produce in all her members.

It remains that we yet further trace the excellence of our Liturgy in its *Moderation and Candour*.

The whole Christian world has from time to time been agitated with controversies of different kinds; and human passions have grievously debased the characters and actions even of good men in every age. But it should seem that the compilers of our Liturgy were inspired with a wisdom and moderation peculiar to themselves. They kept back no truth whatever through fear of giving offence; yet were careful so to state every truth, as to leave those inexcusable who should recede from the Church on account of any sentiments which she maintained. In this they imitated the inspired penmen; who do not dwell on doctrines after the manner of human systems, but introduce them

incidentally, as it were, as occasion suggests, and bring them forward always in connexion with practical duties. The various perfections of God are all stated in different parts; but all in such a way as, without affording any occasion for dispute, tends effectually to encourage us in our addresses to Him. The Godhead of Christ is constantly asserted, and different prayers are expressly addressed to him; but nothing is said in a way of contentious disputation. The influences of the Holy Spirit, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed, are stated; and "the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is sought, in order that we may perfectly love God, and worthily magnify his holy Name;" but all is conveyed in a way of humble devotion, without reflections upon others, or even a word that can lead the thoughts to controversy of any kind. Even the deepest doctrines of our holy religion are occasionally brought forth in a practical view, (in which view alone they ought to be regarded;) that, whilst we contemplate them as truths, we may experience their sanctifying efficacy on our hearts. The truth, the whole truth, is brought forward, without fear; but it is brought forward also without offence: all is temperate; all is candid; all is practical; all is peaceful; and every word is spoken in love. This is an excellency that deserves particular notice, because it is so contrary to what is found in the worship of those, whose addresses to the Most High God depend on the immediate views and

feelings of an individual person, which may be, and not unfrequently are tinged in a lamentable degree by party-views, and unhallowed passions. And we shall do well to bear in mind this excellency, in order that we may imitate it; and that we may shew to all, that the moderation which so eminently characterizes the Offices of our Church, is no less visible in all her members.

Sorry should I be when speaking on this amiable virtue, to transgress it even in the smallest degree: but I appeal to all who hear me, whether there be not a want of this virtue in the temper of the present times; and whether, if our Reformers themselves were to rise again and live amongst us, their pious sentiments and holy lives would not be with many an occasion of offence? I need not repeat the terms which are used to stigmatize those who labour to walk in their paths, nor will I speak of the jealousies which are entertained against those, who live only to inculcate what our Reformers taught. You need not be told that even the moderate sentiments of our Reformers are at this day condemned by many as dangerous errors: and the very exertions, whereby alone the knowledge of them can be communicated unto men, are imputed to vanity and loaded with blame. But though I thus speak, I must acknowledge to the glory of God, that in no place have moderation and candour shone more conspicuously, than in this distinguished seat of literature and science; and I pray God, that the exercise of these vir-

tues may be richly recompensed from the Lord into every bosom, and be followed with all the other graces that accompany salvation.

From this view of our subject it will be naturally asked, Do I then consider the Liturgy as altogether perfect? I answer, No; it is a human composition; and there is nothing human that can claim so high a title as that of absolute perfection. There are certainly some few expressions which might be altered for the better, and which in all probability would have been altered at the Conference which was appointed for the last revision of it, if the unreasonable scrupulosity of some, and the unbending pertinacity of others, had not defeated the object of that assembly. I have before mentioned two which, though capable of being vindicated, might admit of some improvement. And, as I have been speaking strongly of the moderation and candour of the Liturgy, I will here bring forward the only exception to it that I am aware of; and that is found in the Athanasian Creed.\* The damnatory clauses contained in that Creed, do certainly breathe a very different spirit from that which pervades every other part of our Liturgy. As to the doctrine of the Creed, it is perfectly sound, and such as ought to be universally received. But it is matter of regret that any should be led to pronounce a sentence of damnation against their fellow-creatures, in any case where God himself has

\*The Athanasian Creed is omitted in the American Liturgy. *Am. Ed.*



not clearly and certainly pronounced it. Yet whilst I say this, permit me to add, that I think this Creed does not express, nor ever was intended to express, so much as is generally supposed. The part principally objected to, is, that whole statement, which is contained between the first assertion of the doctrine of the Trinity, and the other articles of our faith: and the objection is, that the damnatory clauses which would be justifiable, if confined to the general assertion respecting the doctrine of the Trinity, become unjustifiable, when extended to the whole of that which is annexed to it. But, if we suppose that this intermediate part was intended as an *explanation* of the doctrine in question, we still, I think, ought not to be understood as affirming respecting that explanation all that we affirm respecting the doctrine itself. If any one will read the Athanasian Creed with attention, he will find three damnatory clauses; one at the beginning, which is confined to the general doctrine of the Trinity; another at the close of what, for argument sake, we call the explanation of that doctrine; and another at the end, relating to the other articles of the Creed, such as the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, and his coming at the last day to judge the world. Now whoever will compare the three clauses, will find a marked difference between them; those which relate to the general doctrine of the Trinity, and to the other articles of the Creed, are strong; asserting positively that the points must be be-

*lied*, and that too *on pain of everlasting damnation*; but that which is annexed to the *explanation* of the doctrine, asserts only, that a man who is in earnest about his salvation *ought to think* thus of the Trinity. The words in the original are, *Qui vult ergo salvus esse, ita de Trinitate sentiat*; and this shews in what sense we are to understand the more ambiguous language of our translation; "He therefore that *will* be saved, (i. e. *is willing* or desirous to be saved,) *must* thus think (*let him* thus think) of the Trinity." Thus it appears that the things contained in the beginning and end of the Creed are spoken of as matters of *faith*; but this which is inserted in the midst, as a matter of *opinion* only: in reference to the first and last parts, the certainty of damnation is asserted; but in reference to the intermediate part, nothing is asserted, except that such are the views which we *ought* to entertain of the point in question. Now I would ask, was this difference the effect of chance? or rather, was it not actually intended, in order to guard against the very objection that is here adduced?

This then is the answer which we give on the supposition that the part which appears so objectionable, is to be considered as an *explanation* of the doctrine in question. But what if it was never intended as an *explanation*? What if it contains only a *proof* of that doctrine, and an appeal to our reason that that doctrine is true? Yet, if we examine the Creed, we shall find this to be the real fact. Let us in few

words point out the steps of the argument.

The Creed says, "The Catholic faith is this; that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity: neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance;" and then it proceeds, "For there is one person of the Father," and so on; and then, after *proving* the distinct personality of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and their unity in the Godhead, it adds, "So THAT in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. HE THEREFORE that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity." Here are all the distinct parts of an argument. The position affirmed—the proofs adduced—the deduction made—and the conclusion drawn in reference to the importance of receiving and acknowledging that doctrine:

From hence then I infer, that the damnatory clauses should be understood only in reference to the doctrine affirmed, and not be extended to the parts which are adduced only in confirmation of it; and, if we believe that the doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental article of the Christian faith, we may without any breach of charity apply to that doctrine what our Lord spake of the Gospel at large, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

Thus, in either view, the use of the Creed may be vindicated: for, if we consider the obnoxious part as *an explanation*, the terms requiring it to be received, are intentionally sof-

tened; and if we consider it as *a proof*, it is to the doctrine proved, and not to the proof annexed, that the damnatory clauses are fairly applicable.

Still, after all, I confess, that if the same candour and moderation that are observable in all other parts of the Liturgy, had been preserved here, it would have been better. For though I do verily believe, that those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, are in a fatal error, and will find themselves so at the day of judgment, I would rather deplore the curse that awaits them, than denounce it; and rather weep over them in my secret chamber, than utter anathemas against them in the house of God.

I hope I have now met the question of our Liturgy fairly. I have not confined myself to general assertions, but have set forth the difficulties which are supposed to exist against it, and have given such a solution of them, as I think is sufficient to satisfy any conscientious mind; though it is still matter of regret that any laboured explanation of them should be necessary.

Now then, acknowledging that our Liturgy is not absolutely perfect, and that those who most admire it would be glad if these few blemishes were removed; have we not still abundant reason to be thankful for it? Let its excellencies be fairly weighed; and its blemishes will sink into nothing: let its excellencies be duly appreciated, and every person in the kingdom will acknowledge himself deeply indebted

to those, who with so much care and piety compiled it.

But these blemishes *alone* are seen by multitudes; and its excellencies are altogether forgotten: yea, moreover, frequent occasion is taken from these blemishes to persuade men to renounce their communion with the Established Church, in the hopes of finding a purer worship elsewhere. With what justice such arguments are urged, will best appear by a comparison between the prayers that are offered elsewhere, and those that are offered in the Established Church. There are about 11,000 places of worship in the Established Church, and about as many out of it. Now take the prayers that are offered on any Sabbath in all places out of the Establishment; have them all written down, and every expression sifted and scrutinized as our Liturgy has been: then compare them with the prayers that have been offered in all the Churches of the kingdom; and see what comparison the extemporaneous effusions will bear with our pre-composed forms. Having done this for *one sabbath*, proceed to do it for *a year*: and then, after a similar examination, compare them again; were this done, (and done it ought to be in order to form a correct judgment on the case,) methinks there is scarcely a man in the kingdom that would not fall down on his knees and bless God for the Liturgy of the Established Church.

All that is wanting is, *an heart suited to the Liturgy*, and cast as it were into that mould.

It may with truth be said of us, "They have well said all that they have spoken: O that there were in them such an heart!" Let us only suppose that on any particular occasion there were in all of us such a state of mind as the Liturgy is suited to express: what glorious worship would ours be! and how certainly would God delight to hear and bless us! We will not say that he would come down and fill the house with his visible glory, as he did in the days of Moses and of Solomon: but we will say, that he would come down and fill our souls with such a sense of his presence and love, as would transform us into his blessed image, and constitute a very heaven upon earth. Let each of us then adopt the wish in our text, and say, "O that there *may be* in *me* such an heart!" Let us cultivate the *moderation and candour* which are there exhibited; divesting ourselves of all prejudice against religion, and receiving with impartial readiness the whole counsel of our God. More particularly, whenever we come up to the house of God, let us seek those very dispositions in the use of the Liturgy, which our reformers exercised in the framing of it. Let us bring with us into the presence of our God that *spirituality of mind* that shall fit us for communion with him, and that *purity of heart* which is the commencement of the Divine image in the soul. Let us study whenever we join in the different parts of this Liturgy, to get our hearts *suitably impressed* with the work in which we are engaged; that our

confessions may be humble, our petitions fervent, our thanksgivings devout, and our whole souls obedient to the word we hear. In a word let us not be satisfied with any attainments, but labour to be holy as God himself is holy, and perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. If now a doubt remain on the mind of any individual respecting the transcendent excellence of the Liturgy, let him only take the Litany, and go through every petition of it attentively, and at the close of every petition ask himself, What sort of a person should I be if this petition were so answered to me, that I lived henceforth according to it? and what kind of a world would this be, if all the people that were in it experienced the same answer, and walked according to the same model? If, for instance, we were all from this hour delivered "from all blindness of heart, from pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness; if we were delivered also "from all other deadly sin, and from all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil; what happiness should we not possess? How happy would *the Church* be, if it should "please God to illuminate all bishops, priests, and deacons with true knowledge and understanding of his word, so that both by their preaching and living, they did set it forth and shew it accordingly?" How blessed also would *the whole nation* be, if it pleased God to "endue the Lords of the Council, and all the nobility, with grace, wisdom, and understanding; and to

..bless and keep the magistrates, giving them grace to execute justice and to maintain truth; and further to bless all his people throughout the land!"\* Yea, what *a world* would this be, if from this moment God should "give to all nations unity, peace, and concord!" Were these prayers once answered, we should hear no more complaints of our Liturgy, nor ever wish for any thing *in public*, better than that which is provided for us. May God hasten forward that happy day, when all the assemblies of his people throughout the land shall enter fully into the spirit of these prayers, and be answered in the desire of their hearts: receiving from him an "increase of grace, to hear meekly his word, to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit!" And to us in particular may he give, even to every individual amongst us, "true repentance and forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; and endue us with the grace of his Holy Spirit, that we may amend our lives according to his holy word." Amen and Amen.

\*The prayers for civil rulers are adapted in the American Book of Common Prayer, to the government of the United States. *Am. Ed.*



## SERMON IV.

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DEUT. V. 28, 29.

*They have well said all that they have spoken;  
O that there were such an heart in them.*

THE further we proceed in the investigation of our Liturgy, the more we feel the difficulty of doing justice to it. Such is the spirit which it breathes throughout, that if only a small measure of its piety existed in all the different congregations in which it is used, we should be as holy and as happy a people, as ever the Jews were in the most distinguished periods of their history. If this object has not been yet attained it is not the fault of our Reformers; they have done all that men could do, to transmit to the latest posterity the blessings which they themselves had received; and there is not a member of our Church who has not reason to bless God every day of his life for their labours. But they knew that it would be to little purpose to provide suitable forms of prayer for every different occasion, if they did not also secure, as far as human wisdom could secure, a succession of men, who, actuated by the same ardent piety as themselves, should perform the different offices to the greatest advantage, and carry on by their personal ministrations the blessed work which *they* had begun. Here therefore they bestowed the utmost care; marking with

precision what were the qualifications requisite for the ministerial office, and binding in the most solemn manner all who should be consecrated to it, to a diligent and faithful discharge of their respective duties.

When we first spoke of the Liturgy, we proposed, after vindicating its use, and displaying its excellency, to direct your attention to one particular part, which on that account we should reserve for a distinct and fuller consideration. The part we had in view was, The Ordination Service. We are aware indeed that, in calling your attention so particularly to that, we stand on delicate ground; but being aware of it, we shall take the greater care that no one shall have reason to complain of a want of delicacy. It is the candour that has invariably manifested itself in this congregation, that emboldens me to bring this subject before you. Any attempt to discuss the merits of the Liturgy would indeed be incomplete, if we omitted to notice that part, which so pre-eminently displays its highest excellencies, and is peculiarly appropriate to the audience which I have the honour to address. I trust therefore I shall not be thought assuming, as though I had any pretensions to exalt myself above the least and lowest of my brethren. I well know, that, if my own deficiencies were far less than they are, it would ill become me to take any other than the lowest place; and much more, when I am conscious that they are so great and manifold. For my own humiliation, no less than

that of others, I enter on the task; and I pray God, that, whilst I am shewing what our Reformers inculcated as pertaining to the pastoral office, we may all apply the subject to ourselves, and intreat help from God, that, as "we have well said all that we have spoken, so there may be in us such an heart."

There are three things to be noticed in the Ordination Service, Our *professions*, our *promises*, and our *prayers*; after considering which, we shall endeavour to excite in all that desire, which God has so tenderly, and so affectionately, expressed in our behalf.

Let me begin then with calling your attention to the *professions* which we make, when first we become candidates for the ministerial office.

So sacred was the priesthood under the Law, that no man presumed to take it upon himself but he who was called to it by God, as Aaron was. And though the priesthood of our blessed Lord was of a totally distinct kind from that which shadowed it forth, "yet did he not glorify himself to be made an high priest," but was so constituted by his heavenly Father, who committed to him that office "after the order of Melchizedec." Some call therefore, as from God himself, is to be experienced by all who devote themselves to the service of the sanctuary. Of this our Reformers were convinced; and hence they required the ordaining bishop to put to every candidate that should come before him this solemn interrogation; "Do you trust

that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?" to which he answers, "I trust so."\*

Now I am far from intimating that this call, which every candidate for Orders professes to have received, resembles that which was given to the Apostles: it is certainly not to be understood as though it were a voice or suggestion coming directly from the Holy Ghost: for though God may reveal his will in this manner just as he did in the days of old, yet we have no reason to think that he does. The motion here spoken of is less perceptible: it does not carry its own evidence along with it, (as did that which in an instant prevailed on the Apostles to forsake their worldly business, and to follow Christ;) but it disposes the mind in a gradual and silent way to enter into the service of God: partly from a sense of obligation to him for his redeeming love, partly from a compassion for the ignorant and perishing multitudes around us and partly from a desire to be an honoured instrument in the Redeemer's hands to establish

\*The church also insists on the necessity of a regular *external call, or commission*: For the bishop demands of the candidate, "Do you trust that you are truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and according to the canons of this church, to the ministry of the same." And the preface to the ordination offices declares, "No man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful bishop, priest or deacon in this church, or suffered to execute any of the said functions, except he be called, tried, examined and admitted thereunto, according to the form hereafter following, or hath had episcopal consecration or ordination." *A. Ed.*

and enlarge his kingdom in the world. Less than this cannot reasonably be supposed to be comprehended in that question: and the way to answer it with a good conscience is, to examine ourselves whether we have an eye to our own ease, honour, or preferment; or whether we have really a love to the souls of men, and a desire to promote the honour of our God? The question, in this view of it gives no scope for enthusiasm, nor does it leave any room for doubt upon the mind of him that is to answer it: every man may tell, whether he feels so deeply the value of his own soul, as to be anxious also for the souls of others, and whether, independent of worldly considerations, he has such love to the Lord Jesus Christ, as to desire above all things to advance his glory. These feelings are not liable to be mistaken, because they are always accompanied with corresponding actions, and always productive of appropriate fruits.

Now in all cases where this profession has been made, it may be said, "They have well said all that they have spoken." For this profession is a public acknowledgment that such a call is necessary; and it serves as a barrier to exclude from the sacred office many, who would otherwise have undertaken it from worldly motives. And though it is true, that too many break through this barrier, yet it stands as a witness against them, and in very many instances an effectual witness; testifying to their consciences, that they have come to God

with a lie in their right hand, and making them to tremble, lest they should be condemned at the tribunal of their God, for having, like Ananias and Sapphira, lied unto the Holy Ghost. Yes, very many, who have lightly uttered these words when they first entered into the ministry, have been led by them afterwards to examine their motives more attentively, and to humble themselves for the iniquity they have committed and to surrender up themselves with redoubled energy to the service of their God. Though therefore we regret that any should make this profession on insufficient grounds, we rejoice that it is required of all: and we pray God, that all who have made it, may re-consider it with the attention it deserves; and that all who propose to make it, may pause, till they have maturely weighed the import of their assertion, and can call God himself to attest the truth of it.

Let us next turn our attention to the *promises* by which we bind ourselves on that occasion.

In the service for the Ordination of Priests, there is an exhortation from the bishop, which every minister would do well to read at least once every year. To give a just view of this part of our Liturgy, we must briefly open to you the contents of that exhortation; the different parts of which are afterwards brought before us in the shape of questions, to every one of which a distinct and solemn answer is demanded, as in the presence of the heart-search-

ing God. The exhortation consists of two parts; in the first of which *we are enjoined to consider the importance of that high office to which we are called: and in the second, we are urged to exert ourselves to the uttermost in the discharge of it.*

In reference to the former of these it speaks thus: "Now we exhort you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you have in remembrance, into how high a dignity, and to how weighty an office and charge ye are called; that is to say, to be Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord; to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever."

Where in such few words can we find so striking a representation of the dignity of our office as in this address? We are "Messengers" from the Most High God to instruct men in the knowledge of his will, and to communicate to them the glad tidings of salvation through the mediation of his Son: We are "Watchmen," to warn them of their danger, whilst they continue without an interest in Christ; And we are "Stewards," to superintend his household, and to deal out to every one of his servants from day to day whatsoever their respective necessities require. Now if we occupied such an office in the house of an earthly monarch only, our dignity were great; but to be thus engaged

in the service of the King of kings, is an honour far greater than the temporal government of the whole universe. Should we not then bear in mind what an office is devolved upon us?

From speaking thus respecting *the dignity of the ministry*; it proceeds to speak of *the importance of the trust* committed to us: "Have always therefore printed in your remembrance how great *a treasure*, is committed to your charge. For they are the sheep of Christ which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood. The congregation whom you must serve, is his spouse, and his body." What a tender and affecting representation is here! The souls committed to our care are represented as "the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for which he shed his blood." What bounds would there be to our exertions, if we considered as we ought, that we are engaged in that very work, for which our Lord Jesus Christ came down from the bosom of his Father, and shed his blood upon the cross; and that to us he looks for the completion of his efforts in the salvation of a ruined world? Further still, they are represented as "the spouse and body of Christ," whose welfare ought to be infinitely dearer to us than life itself. We know what concern men would feel, if the life of their own spouse, or of their own body, were in danger, though they could only hope to protract for a few years a frail and perishable existence; what then ought we not to feel for "the spouse and body of Christ," whose everlasting welfare is dependent on our exertions!



After thus impressing on our minds the importance of our office, the exhortation proceeds in the next place to urge us to a diligent performance of it. It reminds us, that we are answerable to God for every soul committed to our charge; that there must be no limit to our exertions, except what the capacity of our minds and the strength of our bodies have assigned. It calls upon us to use all the means in our power to qualify ourselves for the discharge of it, by withdrawing ourselves from worldly cares, worldly pleasures, worldly studies, worldly habits, and pursuits of every kind, in order to fix the whole bent of our minds on the study of the Holy Scriptures, and of those things which will assist us in the understanding of them. It directs us to be instant in prayer to God for the assistance of his Holy Spirit, by whose gracious influences alone we shall be enabled to fulfil our duties aright. And, finally, it enjoins us so to regulate our own lives, and so to govern our respective families, that we may be patterns to all around us; and that we may be able to address our congregations in the language of St. Paul, "Whatsoever ye have heard and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." But it will be satisfactory to you to hear the very words of the exhortation itself; "If it shall happen the same church or any member thereof, do take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue. Where-

fore consider with yourselves the end of your ministry towards the children of God, towards the spouse and body of Christ; and see that you *never cease your labour, your care and diligence* until you have done *all that lieth in you*, according to your bounden duty; to bring all such as are or shall be committed to your charge unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you either for error in religion, or for viciousness of life."

"Forasmuch then as your office is both of so great excellency, and of so great difficulty, ye see with how great care and study ye ought to apply yourselves, as well that ye may shew yourselves dutiful and thankful unto that Lord who hath placed you in so high a dignity; as also to beware that neither you yourselves offend, nor be occasion that others offend. Howbeit ye cannot have a mind and will thereto of yourselves; for that will and ability is given of God alone; therefore ye ought, and have need to pray earnestly for his Holy Spirit. And seeing that you cannot by any other means compass the doing of so weighty a work, pertaining to the salvation of man, but with doctrine and exhortation taken out of the Holy Scriptures, and with a life agreeable to the same; consider how studious ye ought to be in reading and learning the Scriptures, and in framing the manners both of yourselves and of them that specially pertain unto you, according to the

rule of the same scriptures: and for this self-same cause, how ye ought to forsake and set aside (as much as you may) all worldly cares and studies."

Here let us pause a moment, to reflect, what stress our Reformers laid on the Holy Scriptures, as the only sure directory for our faith and practice, and the only certain rule of all our ministrations. They have clearly given it as their sentiment, that to study the word of God ourselves, and to open it to others, is the proper labour of a minister; a labour, that calls for all his time, and all his attention: and by this zeal of their's in behalf of the Inspired Volume, they were happily successful in bringing it into general use. But, if they could look down upon us at this time, and see what an unprecedented zeal has pervaded all ranks and orders of men amongst us, for the dissemination of that truth, which they, at the expense of their own lives, transmitted to us; how would they rejoice and leap for joy! Yet, methinks, if they cast an eye upon this favoured spot, and saw, that, whilst the Lord Jesus Christ is thus exalted in almost every other place, we are lukewarm in his cause; and whilst thousands all around us are emulating each other in exertions to extend his kingdom through the world, we, who are so liberal on other occasions, have not yet appeared in his favour; they would be ready to rebuke our tardiness, as David did the indifference of Judah, from whom he had reason to expect the most active support; "Why are ye the last to

bring the king back to his house, seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house?"\* But I am persuaded, that there is nothing wanting but that a suitable proposal be made by some person of influence amongst us; and we shall soon approve ourselves worthy sons of those pious ancestors; I would hope there is not an individual amongst us, who would not gladly lend his aid, that "the word of the Lord may run and be glorified," not in this kingdom only, but, if possible, throughout all the earth.

But to return to the bishop's exhortation. "We have good hope that you have well weighed and pondered these things with yourselves long before this time; and that you have clearly determined, by God's grace, to *give yourselves wholly to this office*, whereunto it hath pleased God to call you; so that, as much as lieth in you, you will apply yourselves wholly to this one thing; and draw all your cares and studies this way; and that you will continually pray to God the Father, by the mediation of our only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost: that by daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures, ye may wax riper and stronger in your ministry, and that ye may so endeavour yourselves from time to time to sanctify the lives of you and yours, and to fashion them after the rule and doctrine of Christ, that ye may be wholesome and godly examples and patterns for the people to follow.

\*2 Saml. xix. 11.

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After this, the bishop calling upon the candidates in the name of God and of his church, to give a plain and solemn answer to the questions which he shall propose to them, puts the substance of the exhortation into several distinct questions, two of which only, for brevity sake, we will repeat: "Will you be diligent in prayers, and in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh?" To which we answer, "I will endeavour myself so to do, the Lord being my helper;" Then he asks again; "Will you be diligent to frame and fashion your own selves and families, according to the doctrine of Christ, and to make both yourselves and them, as much as in you lieth, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ?" To which we answer, "I will apply myself thereto, the Lord being my helper."

These are the promises which we make before God in the most solemn manner at the time of our Ordination. Now I would ask, Can any human being entertain a doubt, whether in making these promises, we have not "well said all that we have spoken?" Can any of us say, that too much has been required of us? Do we not see and feel, that, as the honour of the office is great, so is the difficulty of performing it aright, and the danger of performing it in a negligent and heartless manner? If a man undertake any office that requires indefatigable exertion, and that involves the temporal inter-

ests of men to a great extent, we expect of that man the utmost diligence and care. If then, such be expected of the servants of *men*, where temporal interests only are affected, what must be expected of the servants of *God*, where the eternal interests of men, and the everlasting honour of God, are so deeply concerned? I say again, We cannot but approve the promises we have made; and methinks, God himself, when he heard our vows, expressed his approbation of them, saying, "They have well said all that they have spoken."

We come, lastly, to mention our *prayers*, which were offered to God on that occasion.

And here we have one of the most pious, and affecting institutions that ever was established upon earth. The bishop, who during the preceding exhortation and questions has been seated in his chair, now rises up, and in a standing posture makes his earnest supplication to God in behalf of all the candidates, in these words; "Almighty God, who hath given you this will to do all these things, grant also unto you strength and power to perform the same; that he may accomplish his work which he had begun in you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." After this a request is made to the whole congregation then present, to offer up their prayers in secret to God, and to make their supplications to God for all these things. And, that they may have time to do so it is appointed, that *silence shall be kept for a space*; the public services being for a while suspended

in order to give the congregation an opportunity of pouring out their souls before God in behalf of the persons who are to be ordained.

What an idea does this give us of the sanctity of our office, and of the need we have of Divine assistance for the performance of it! And how beautifully does it intimate to the people the interest they have in an efficient ministry! Surely, if they felt as they ought their need of spiritual instruction, they would never discontinue their prayers for those who are placed over them in the Lord, but would plead in their behalf night and day.

After a sufficient time has been allowed for these private devotions, a hymn to the Holy Ghost is introduced; (*the candidates all continuing in a kneeling posture*;) a hymn, which in beauty of composition and spirituality of import cannot easily be surpassed. Time will not allow me to make any observations upon it; but it would be a great injustice to our Liturgy, if I should omit to recite it; and it will be a profitable employment, if, whilst we recite it, we all adopt it as expressing our own desires, and add our Amen to every petition contained in it.

“Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,  
And lighten with celestial fire.  
Thou the anointing Spirit art,  
Who dost thy seven-fold gifts impart.  
Thy blessed unction from above,  
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.  
Enable with perpetual light  
The dulness of our blinded sight.  
Anoint and cheer our soiled face  
With the abundance of thy grace.  
Keep far our foes; give peace at home;

Where thou art Guide, no ill can come;  
 Teach us to know the Father, Son,  
 And thee, of both, to be but one:  
 That through the ages all along,  
 This may be our endless song;  
 Praise to thy eternal merit,  
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

In this devout hymn the agency of the Holy Spirit, as the one source of light, and peace, and holiness, is fully acknowledged, and earnestly sought as the necessary means of forming pastors after God's heart: and it is well entitled to the encomium which has been already so often mentioned, "They have well said all that they have spoken."

Passing over the remaining prayers, we conclude this part of our subject with observing, that no sooner is the imposition of hands finished, and the commission given to the candidates to preach the gospel, than the newly ordained ministers consecrate themselves to God at his table; and seal, as it were, their vows by partaking of the body and blood of Christ; into whose service they have been just admitted, and whom they have sworn to serve with their whole hearts.

Thus far then "all is well said:" and if our hearts be in unison with our words, verily we shall have reason to bless God to all eternity. "O that there *were* in us such an heart!"

Glad should I be, if your time would admit of it, to set forth at considerable length the benefits that would accrue from a conformity of heart in us to all that has been before stated: but the



indulgence with which I have hitherto been favoured must not be abused. I shall therefore close the subject with only two reflections, illustrative of the wish contained in the text.

First, if such an heart were in us, *how happy should we be in our own souls!* Men may be so thoughtless, as to cast off all concern about futurity, and to say, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart." But, if once we begin to indulge any serious reflections we cannot avoid thinking of our responsibility on account of the souls committed to our charge. *Then*, if we bring to mind that solemn declaration of God, that "the souls of our people shall be required at our hands," we must of necessity tremble for our state. The concerns of our own souls are of more weight than all other things in the world; and the thought of perishing under the weight of *our own* personal transgressions is inexpressibly awful, but the thought of perishing under the guilt of destroying *hundreds and thousands* of immortal souls, is so shocking, that it cannot be endured: if once admitted into the mind, it will fill us with consternation and terror; and the excuses which now appear so satisfactory to us, will vanish like smoke. We shall not then think it sufficient to have fulfilled our duties by proxy; since others can but perform their own duties; nor can any diligence of the *ir's* ever justify our neglect: having sworn for ourselves, we must execute for ourselves; nor ever be satisfied with committing that trust to others, which at the bar of judg-

ment we must give account of for ourselves. Nor shall we then think it sufficient to plead, that we have other engagements, which interfere with the discharge of our ministerial duties; unless we can be assured, that God will wave his claims upon us, and acknowledge the labours which we have undertaken for our own temporal advantage, more important than those, which respect his honour, and man's salvation. On the other hand, if we have the testimony of our own consciences, that we have endeavoured faithfully to perform our ordination vows, and to execute, though with much imperfection, the work assigned us, we shall lift up our heads with joy. Matter for deep humiliation indeed, even the most laborious ministers will find: but at the same time they will have an inward consciousness, that they have exerted themselves sincerely for God, though not so earnestly as they might: and, in the hope that the Saviour, whose love they have proclaimed to others, will have mercy upon them, they cast themselves on him for the acceptance of their services, and expect through him the salvation of their souls. Moreover, if we have been diligent in the discharge of our high office, we shall have a good hope that we have been instrumental to the salvation of others, whom we shall have as our joy and crown of rejoicing in the last day. With these prospects before us, we shall labour patiently, waiting, like the husbandman, for a distant harvest. Trials we shall have of many kinds; and many arising solely

from our fidelity to God: but we shall bear up under them, going "through evil report and good report," till we have fought our fight, and finished our course: and then at last we shall be welcomed as faithful servants into the joyous presence of our Lord. Who would not wish for such happiness as this? Only then let our hearts experience what our lips have uttered, and that happiness is ours: only let our professions be verified, our promises fulfilled, and our prayers realized, and all will be well: God will see in us the heart which he approves, and will honour us with testimonies of his approbation to all eternity.

My second observation is, If there were in us such an heart, *What blessings would result to all around us!* The careless minister may spend many years in a populous parish, and yet never see one sinner converted from the error of his ways, or turned unto God in newness of life. But the faithful servant of Jehovah will have some fruit of his ministry. God will answer to him that prayer at the close of the Ordination Service, "Grant that thy word spoken by their mouths, may have such success, that it may never be spoken in vain." God indeed does not make all equally useful; but he will leave none without witness, that the word which they preach is his Word, and that it is "the power of God unto the salvation of men." Behold, wherever such a minister is fixed, what a change takes place in reference to religion! The obstinately wicked, who either hear him

with prejudice, or turn their backs on his ministry, may possibly be only more hardened by the means he uses for their conversion : and circumstances may arise, where those who would once have plucked out their own eyes for him, may become for awhile his enemies; but still there are many that will arise and call him blessed; many will acknowledge him as their spiritual father; many will bless God for him, and shew in their respective circles the happy effects of his ministry. They will love his person; they will enjoy his preaching: they will tread in his steps; and they will shine as lights in a dark world. What then might not be hoped for if all who have undertaken the sacred office of the ministry, fulfilled their engagements in the way we have before described? What if all *prayed* the prayers instead of reading them; and laboured *out of the pulpit* as well as in it: striving to bring all their people, “not only to the knowledge and love of Christ, but to such ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, as to leave no room among them either for error in religion, or for viciousness of life?” If there were such exertions made in every parish, we should hear no more complaints about the increase of Dissenters. The people’s prejudices in general are in favour of the Establishment: and the more any persons have considered the excellence of the Liturgy, the more are they attached to the Established Church. Some indeed would entertain prejudices against it, even if all the twelve Apostles were members of it, and

ministered in it; but, in general, it is a want of zeal in its ministers, and not any want of purity in its institutions, that gives such an advantage to Dissenters. Let me not be misunderstood, as though by these observations I meant to suggest any thing disrespectful of the Dissenters; (for I honour all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, of whatever church they be; and I wish them from my heart every blessing that their souls can desire:) but, whilst I see such abundant means of edification in the Church of England, I cannot but regret, that any occasion should be given to men to seek for that in other places, which is so richly provided for them in their own church. Only let us be faithful to our engagements, and our churches will be crowded, our Sacraments thronged, our hearers edified: good institutions will be set on foot; liberality will be exercised, the poor benefitted, the ignorant enlightened, the distressed comforted; yea and our "wilderness world will rejoice and blossom as the rose." O that we might see this happy day; which, I would fondly hope, has begun to dawn! O that God would arise and "take to him his great power, and reign amongst us!" O that he might no longer have to express a wish, "that there were in us such an heart;" but rather have to rejoice over us as *possessed* of such an heart; and that he would magnify himself in us as instruments of good to a ruined world! The Apostle to the Hebrews represents all the saints of former ages as witnesses of the

conduct of those who were then alive; and he urges it as an argument with them to exert themselves to the uttermost: "Having then, says he, so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Thus let us consider the Reformers of our Church as now looking down upon us, and filled with anxiety for the success of their labours: let us hear them saying, "We did all that human foresight could do: We shewed to ministers what they ought to be: we bound them by the most solemn ties to walk in the steps of Christ and his Apostles: if any shall be luke-warm in their office, we shall have to appear in judgment against them, and shall be the means of aggravating their eternal condemnation." Let us, I say, consider them as spectators of our conduct; and endeavour to emulate their pious examples. Let us consider likewise, that the Liturgy itself will appear against us in judgment, if we labour not to the utmost of our power to fulfil the engagements which we have voluntarily entered into: Yea, God himself will say to us, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." May God enable us all to lay these things to heart: that, whether we have already contracted, or are intending at a future period to contract, this fearful responsibility, we may duly consider what account we shall have to give of it in the day of judgment.

# THE CHURCHMAN'S CONFESSION

OR

AN APPEAL TO THE LITURGY.



*We write none other things unto you than what  
you read or acknowledge...2 Cor. i. 13.*

AS the testimony of one's own conscience is the strongest support under false accusations, so an appeal to the consciences of others is the most effectual means of refuting the charges that are brought against us. To this species of argument God himself condescended to have recourse, in order to convince his people, that the evils which they imputed to him, originated wholly in their own folly and wickedness: "O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? and wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"\* . . . . . "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are Lords, we will come no more unto thee?"† "Ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?"‡ The inspired writers also not unfrequently vindicate themselves in a similar manner. St. Paul, for

\*Isaiah v. 3, 4. †Jer. ii. 5. 31, ‡Ezek. xviii. 25.

instance, had been represented by some at Corinth as fickle and inconstant, because he had not come to them at the time they had expected him. To clear himself from this imputation, he informs them, that he had met with insuperable obstacles in Asia, which had prevented him from prosecuting his intended journey; and that in the whole of his conduct towards them he had been actuated, not by temporizing motives and carnal policy, but by the most strict unblemished integrity. He declares, that he had "the testimony of his own conscience" respecting this;\* and that he had a further testimony in their consciences also, respecting the truth of what he said; that, in asserting these things, "he wrote no other things than what they had read in his former epistle, and were constrained to acknowledge; and he trusted they should acknowledge even to the end."

The faithful Minister of Christ derives great advantage from being able to appeal to records the authority of which is acknowledged by his hearers. By referring them to the holy Scriptures in proof of all that he advances, he establishes his word upon the most unquestionable authority, and fixes conviction upon their minds. The ministers of the Church of England have a yet further advantage, because, in addition to the Scriptures, they have other authorities to which they may refer in confirmation of the truths they utter. It is true, we are not to put



any human compositions on a level with the inspired volume: the Scriptures alone are the proper standard of truth; but the Articles; Homilies, and Liturgy of the Church of England are an authorized exposition of the sense in which all her members profess to understand the Scriptures. To these therefore we appeal as well as to the sacred Records, But because it would occupy more time than can reasonably be allowed, for one discourse to appeal to all at once, we shall content ourselves with calling your attention to the Liturgy, and especially to that part of it which we call the general Confession. We will briefly state what doctrines we insist upon as necessary to be received; and under each we will compare our statements with what we "read" in the Scriptures, and "acknowledge" in our prayers; And we trust that, after having done this, we shall be able to adopt the language of the text and say, "We write none other things unto you than what ye read, and acknowledge."

There are three things which, as it is our duty, so also it is our continual labour, to make known; namely, *Our lost estate—The means of our recovery—and the path of duty.*

Permit me then to state what we declare respecting the first of these points, *Our lost estate.*

We declare, that every man is a sinner before God: that both the actions and the hearts of men are depraved: that whatever difference there may be between one and another with

respect to open sin, there is no difference with respect to our alienation from God, or our radical aversion to his holy will. We affirm, that on account of our defection from God, we deserve his heavy displeasure; that the most moral and sober, as well as the base and profligate, are under condemnation on account of sin; and that all of us, without exception, must perish, if we do not turn to God in the way that he has prescribed.

We think, yea we are sure, that we have abundant proof of these things in the holy Scriptures. The *universality* of our departure from God, and our danger in consequence of it, is declared in the strongest terms by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. "There is none righteous," says he, "no not one: there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God: they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one." To this he adds, "that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."\* We could wish you particularly to notice what an *accumulation of words* there is in this short passage to prove the universality of our guilt and misery. Of righteous persons, there is "none," "none," "none," "no not one," "no not one;" "all" are guilty, all "together," even "every" person, and "all the world." Will any one, after reading this passage, presume to think himself an exception!

\*Rom. iii. 10—19.

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Nor is the *depth* of our depravity less clear than its universality. "The heart," says Jeremiah, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it!"\* This is spoken, not of some particular person or age or country, but of mankind at large, even of our whole race. Solomon affirms the same when he says, "The heart of the Sons of men is full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live and after that they go to the dead."† And to the same effect is that declaration of St. Paul that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be."‡ To these general affirmations of Scripture, we may add the confessions of the most eminent Saints. Job, who was the most perfect man on earth in his day, no sooner attained the knowledge of his real character than he exclaimed, "Behold, I am vile."|| St. Paul also, speaking of himself and of all the other Apostles, says, "We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh; fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."¶

In labouring to establish these awful truths we are often considered as libelling human nature and as representing men in such an humiliating and distressed state as to fill them with melancholy, or drive them to despair. Let us then in vindication both of ourselves and of our doctrines, compare these assertions with our

\*Jer. xvii. 9. †Ecl. ix. 3. ‡Rom. viii. 7.

||Job. xl. 4. §Eph. ii. 3. and Titus. iii. 3.

public acknowledgments. We begin our confession with saying, "*We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.*" This is a peculiar expression that must not be overlooked. We apprehend it does not mean merely that we have departed from God, but also that we have never sought to return to him; for other animals will find their way back when they have wandered from their home; but it is rarely, if ever known that the sheep traces back its footsteps to the fold from whence it has strayed; if it return at all it is not by any foresight of its own. How just a picture does this exhibit of our fallen race! That we have departed from God is too plain, to be denied; but in how few do we behold any solicitude to return to him! How few are there who search the Scriptures daily, in order to find their way back! How few who implore help and direction from their God with an earnestness at all proportioned to the urgency of their case!

Is it inquired, wherein we have so greatly erred! Our own acknowledgments contain the most satisfactory reply; "*We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.*" How true is this! Look at all mankind, see them from infancy to youth, and from youth to old age; What are they all following! are they obeying unreservedly the commands of God? are they in compliance with his will, mortifying every evil propensity, and doing the things which are pleasing in his sight? Alas! nothing is further from their minds than this.

Their pursuits indeed vary according to their age, their circumstances, their habits, but whatever they be, they are no other than the devices and desires of their own hearts: if in any thing they appear to do the will of God, they do not act from a principle of love to him, but from a desire to conform to the customs of their country, and to lay a foundation for self-applause. The whole tenor of our lives is but too justly marked in those following acknowledgments, "*We have offended against thy holy laws; we have left undone those things which we ought to have done: and have done those things which we ought not to have done.*" Permit me to ask, Which of the laws of God have we not violated times without number? Shall we say, We have not committed murder or adultery? How vain the boast, if we interpret the commandments in their full latitude, and call to mind the declarations of our Lord, that an angry word is murder, and a wanton look adultery!\* To go into all our sins of omission, and commission, were an endless task. Suffice it to say, that in ten thousand instances "we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, against the Divine Majesty:" and have habitually neglected the interests of our souls.

Perhaps it may be said, "Our actions indeed have been evil, but our hearts are good." But how does this accord with that which in our Confession forms the summit of the climax, "*There is no health in us.*" Here our Church

\*Matt. v. 27, 28.

has taught us to trace all the evils of our life to the fountain-head, a corrupt and wicked heart. In this expression she evidently refers, either to that confession of the Apostle, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;"\* or rather to that most humiliating declaration of the Prophet, "From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores."† The import of the words is plain; we confess before our God, that we are altogether depraved; that we are disordered in every member of our body, and in every faculty of our soul; that our understanding is darkened, our will perverse, our affections sensual, our memory treacherous, our conscience seared, and all our "members, instruments of unrighteousness and sin."

Thus far then we are fully vindicated, vindicated too, we trust, in your consciences, in all that we have affirmed respecting the lost estate of man. We do indeed represent the whole human race, as in a most deplorable condition: but no member of our Establishment can controvert our positions without denying the plainest asseverations of Holy Writ, and contradicting his own most solemn acknowledgments.

Let us now turn our attention to the second point which we proposed to notice, namely, *The means of our recovery* from this state.

We affirm that, in order to obtain salvation,

\*Rom. vii. 18. . . . †Isaiah i. 5, 6.

two things are necessary, "Repentance towards God and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." By repentance, we do not mean that superficial work which consists in saying, "I am sorry for what I have done;" but in such a deep sense of our guilt and danger, as leads us with all humility of mind to God and stirs us up to a most earnest application for mercy. We must feel sin to be a burden to our souls; we must be made to tremble at the wrath of God which we have merited; we must cry to him for deliverance from it, as Peter cried for preservation from the waves, "Save Lord, or I perish;" and this must be our experience, not merely after some flagrant transgression, or on some particular occasion, but at all times: it must be, as it were, the daily habit of our minds.

Is it needful to confirm this from the holy Scriptures? Surely we need not be reminded of what our Lord has repeatedly affirmed; "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish."† We need not be told that it is "the weary and heavy laden" whom Christ invites;‡ that it is "the broken and contrite heart which God will not despise:"|| that we must "loathe ourselves for all our abominations:"§ that we must "sow in tears, and go on our way weeping:"¶ that we must cry with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me;"\*\* and with Job, "I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes."††

Yet, when this is insisted on, and pressed

\*Acts xx. 21. †Luke xiii. 3, 5. ‡Matt. xi. 28.  
 ||Ps. li. 17. §Ezek. xxxvi. 31. ¶Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6.

\*\*Rom. vii. 24. ††Job xlii. 6.

upon the conscience as of universal, absolute, and indispensable necessity, we are told, that we carry matters to excess: that however such bitter contrition may suit the profligate and abandoned, it is unnecessary in the case of the more moral and decent: they have never done any thing that requires such deep humiliation; they have no such cause to fear and tremble; they have indeed sinned, but are in no danger of perishing; nor have they ever merited the wrath of God.

But is it not astonishing that any member of the Established Church should be so ignorant as to make these vain assertions? What are the terms in which we address the Divine Majesty every time that we attend his worship? *"Do thou, O Lord have mercy upon us, miserable offenders: Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults: Restore thou them that are penitent."* Have we then been dissembling with God all our days; calling ourselves "miserable offenders," when we feel no misery at all; and when, instead of bewailing our offences, we think ourselves almost, if not altogether, as good as we need to be? In this prayer we do not presume even to expect mercy, except as persons deeply penitent and contrite. And let it be remembered, that these petitions are put into the mouths of all the congregation; there is not one form for one class of persons, and another for another; but all profess to approach God as the repenting publican, smiting upon their breasts, and crying, "God be merciful to me a



sinner!"\* We mean not to say, that no person can hope for mercy, who does not feel such or such a measure of contrition, (for all who pray in *sincerity*, may hope for acceptance, though their hearts be not so contrite as they could wish,) but to shew, that all members of the church of England acknowledge that penitence is highly suited to their state.

But, besides their repentance, we observed, that faith also was necessary, even faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This we invariably and inflexibly affirm. As it is not our good works and meritorious life that will save us, so neither will our repentance save us. If we could shed rivers of tears, they never would avail to cleanse us from one single sin. It is the blood of Christ, and that alone, that can atone for mortal guilt: That is "the fountain that was opened for sin and uncleanness:"† and as long as the world shall stand, we must require of sinners to wash in it, in order that they may be clean. And, for as much as men are with great difficulty turned from endeavoring "to establish their own righteousness,"‡ or to unite their own fancied merits with the merits of Christ, we guard them strongly against this fatal error; we declare to them, that, if they do this, they will invalidate the whole gospel; and that, if ever they be saved at all, it must be by an humble, simple reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ. That there are blessings promised to the penitent, and to the obedient, we very wil-

\* Luke xviii. 13. † Zach. xiii. 1. ‡ Rom. x. 8,

lingly allow: and on proper occasions we are glad to bring forward those promises in order to encourage men to repent and obey; but that men are justified by their repentance or obedience, or in any other way than by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we utterly deny. And we declare that, if men seek to be justified in any other way, "Christ shall profit them nothing."\*

And do we, in affirming these things, deviate at all from what we read in the holy Scriptures; Does not our blessed Lord expressly say I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the father but by me."† He tells us plainly, that "he who believeth on him, hath everlasting life: and that he who believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him:"‡ and again, "He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.|| To the same effect also is the testimony of his Apostles: We find them invariably directing penitents to believe in him as the only, and effectual means of obtaining acceptance with God. When the jailor came in to Paul and Silas trembling, and crying, "Sirs what shall I do to be saved;" the answer given him was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."§ Instead of varying their directions according to the different characters they addressed, they affirm, in the strongest manner, that "there is no other foundation whereon any man can build,"¶ "nor any other name whereby any man can be sav-

\*Gal. v. 2.

†John xiv. 6.

‡John iii. 36.

§Mark xvi. 16. ¶Acts xvi, 30, 31. ¶¶1 Cor. iii. 11.

ed.\* And when they saw in any a disposition to unite the observance of some ceremonial or moral duties as a joint ground of their hope, they warned them plainly, that their salvation must be "wholly of grace or wholly of works;"† and that if they relied in any measure upon their works, "they were fallen from grace," they were "become debtors to do the whole law," and that "Christ was become of no effect unto them;"‡ with respect to them "he was dead in vain."§

Offensive as these statements are, and reprobated as being of a licentious tendency, wherein do they differ from our own acknowledgments? We pray that God would "restore to his favour them that are penitent;" but how, and in what manner, do we expect that restoration to be accomplished? Is it uncovenanted mercy that we ask? Or is it according to our own good works that we desire to find acceptance? No; we profess that our reliance is altogether on God's promises as they are revealed in the gospel; "*Restore us, according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Among the promises to which we may be supposed to refer, the following must certainly be numbered: "Look unto me, and be ye saved;" "Come unto me and I will give you rest."¶ "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."\*\* "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."†† "All that believe, shall be

\* Acts. iv. 12. † Rom. xi. 6. ‡ Gal. v. 3, 4.

§ Gal. ii. 21. § Isai. xlv. 22. ¶ Matt. xi. 28,

\*\* John vi. 37. †† 1 John i. 7.

justified from all things.\*" "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." †But whatever the promises be, whether their reference to Christ be more or less plain, we are assured that it is in him and in him alone, that the promises are confirmed to us; for the Apostle says, "All the promises of God IN HIM are yea, and IN HIM amen." ‡ It is in Christ alone that God can "be just, and at the same time the justifier of sinners;"§ and therefore when we plead that promise, that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,"¶ we can expect its accomplishment in no other way than thro' faith in Christ.

Thus under this head also may be seen a perfect harmony between those things which we have affirmed, and those which you "read" in the Scriptures, and "acknowledge" in your prayers.

Nor do we doubt a similar issue to our inquiries, while under the last head of our discourse we state to you *The path of duty*.

We inculcate the practice of every personal and relative duty. But we are not satisfied with that standard of holiness which is current in the world: we require a higher tone of morals; in addition to sobriety and honesty, we insist upon a life entirely devoted to God; we affirm, that it is every man's duty to 'delight himself in God;'‡ to have such a lively sense of Christ's love to him, as shall constrain him to an unre-

\*Acts xiii. 39. †Isa. i. 18. ‡2 Cor. i. 20. §Rom. iii. 26. ¶1 John i. 9. ††Job xxvii. 10 & Ps. xxxvii. 4.

served surrender of all his faculties and powers to the service of his Lord.\* We must live for God: we must be like a faithful servant, who inquires from day to day what his master's will is: and inquires, in order that he may do it. As a servant who had neglected all his duties through the day, would feel ashamed and afraid of his master's displeasure, so should we feel ashamed and afraid, if any day pass without having executed to the utmost of our power the duties of it. We should walk as on the confines of the eternal world, and act as persons who must shortly give account of every talent that has been committed to them. To be "dead unto the world,"† and "alive unto God;"‡ to attain more and more of the divine image;|| to "grow up into Christ in all things;"§ to enjoy fellowship with God,¶ and anticipate the enjoyments of heaven,\*\* this is our duty, and should be our daily study and delight.

In requiring so much, we are supposed to require what is altogether impracticable, or at least, what if practised, would unfit us for all the common offices of life. But what do we read in the holy Scriptures? Do they require of us less than this? Do they not teach us to "yield ourselves living sacrifices to God as our most reasonable service?"†† Do they not enjoin us to "live henceforth not unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us, and rose again?"‡‡ Do they not require that "whether we eat or drink

\*2 Cor. v. 14. †Gal. vi. 14. ‡Rom. vi. 11.

||2 Cor. iii. 18. §Eph. iv. 15. ¶1 John i. 8.

\*\*Eph. i. 13, 14. ††Rom. xii. 1. ‡‡2 Cor. v. 15.

or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God?"\* And is not the Holy Spirit, (through whose divine agency alone we can do any thing that is good) promised to us for this very end, to renew us after the divine image in righteousness and true holiness?

And wherein do our own acknowledgments differ from this? Let us attend to the supplications which we offer before God;—*"Grant, O most merciful Father, for Christ's sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name."* Here so far from putting godliness out of our thoughts, we profess to desire it in the first place; and justly do we ask that first, because, without that, all our acts of righteousness and sobriety would be no better than splendid sins; they would want the motives and principles which alone distinguish them from heathen virtues. Mark too the measure and degree in which we desire these virtues: we are not satisfied with that which shall gain us a name among men; we ask, and let it ever be remembered that without the influences of God's Spirit, all our own efforts will be in vain, that we may be enabled to attain such a degree of piety, as that God may be glorified in us and that the transcendant excellence of Christianity may be visibly exhibited in our lives.

We appeal then to all; What do we, or what can we ask of you more than this? And if these high attainments be not necessary, why do you ask of God for Christ's sake to give them to you?

\*1 Cor. x. 31.

if, on the other hand, they are necessary, why are we deemed enthusiastic and over-righteous for requiring them at your hands? If in your prayers you mean what you say, you justify us; and if you do not mean what you say, you condemn yourselves, you confess yourselves to be hypocrites and dissemblers with God.

We have now finished our consideration of that truly scriptural prayer; and we will conclude with commending it to you as a test in a two-fold view.

First, take it as *a test whereby to try the discourses which you hear*. As Members of the Church of England, we have a right to expect that the discourses of Ministers shall correspond with the Liturgy of our Church. Certainly, in the first instance, the holy Scriptures are to be our guide; but, as all profess to have the Scriptures on their side, let us bring to our aid that excellent compendium of religion which we have been considering.

Are there any who discount upon the dignity of our nature, the goodness of our hearts, and the rectitude of our lives? What appearance do such sentiments make when brought to the touchstone of this prayer? Are they not as opposite as darkness is to light? and should we not regard such statements as the effusions of pride and ignorance? should we not tremble for those who hear them, lest being "blind followers of the blind, they all together should fall into the ditch?"\*

\*Matt. xv. 14.

Are there others who tell us that we are to be saved by our works, and who would thereby lull us asleep in impenitence, and divert our attention from the Saviour of the world? Let us not be deluded by the syren song. Let us turn to our own confessions to refute such antichristian doctrines: Let us learn from them the necessity of humiliation and contrition, and of "fleeing to Christ, as to the refuge that is set before us." As for the idea, that the founding of our hopes upon Christ and upon the promises made to us in him, will lead to a neglect of good works, let us see what the Compilers of our Liturgy thought of that, and what they have put in the mouths of all believing penitents: do not the very same persons who seek for mercy through Christ, intreat of God that they may be enabled to "live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of his holy name?" And is it not notorious that the very persons who maintain most steadfastly the doctrines of faith, are uniformly condemned for the excessive and unnecessarily strictness of their lives?

In the same manner, if there be any who plead for a conformity to the world, and decry all vital godliness as enthusiasm, we may see what judgment is to be formed of them also. They may call themselves Christians; but they have nothing of Christianity, except the name.

Lastly, if there be any who separate the different parts of religion, inculcating some to the neglect of others; magnifying works to the exclusion of faith, or establishing faith to the de-



struction of good works, or confounding faith and works, instead of distinguishing them as the fruit from the root; if such, I say, there be, let their statements be contrasted with the order, the fulness and the harmony of this prayer; and the erroneousness of them will instantly appear. We do not wish to produce critical hearers; but it is the duty of every man to "prove all things and to hold fast that which is good;"\* and as we have the advantage of an authorized standard of divine truth, we invite all to search that, as well as the holy Scriptures; and we do not hesitate to say of this prayer in particular, what the prophet speaks of the inspired volume, "To the law, and to the testimony: if Ministers speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."†

Next, let us take this prayer as *a test whereby to try our own experience*. We may now discard from our minds all that this or that Minister may lay down as necessary to our salvation. We have here, what no man can reasonably dispute, our own acknowledgments. We have here as beautiful, as just, as scriptural a summary of experimental religion, as ever was penned from the foundation of the world. The man that from his inmost soul can utter this prayer, is a real Christian. Whatever be his views with respect to some particular doctrines, (those I mean which are distinguished by the name of Calvinism) his heart is right with God. Whether he admit or reject

\*1 Thess. v. 21.

†Isai. viii. 20.

those abstruser points, he is accepted of God: and if he were to die this moment, he would be in heaven the next; the termination of his warfare would be to him the commencement of everlasting felicity. But is this the experience of us all? Would to God it were! All will repeat the words: but it is one thing to repeat, and another to feel them. Let us then bring ourselves to this test; and never imagine that we are in a Christian state, till we can appeal to God, that this prayer is the very language of our hearts. In examining ourselves respecting it, let us inquire; whether from our inmost souls we lament the numberless transgressions of our lives, and the unsearchable depravity of our hearts? When we cry to God for mercy as miserable offenders, do we abhor ourselves for our guilt, and tremble for our danger? Do we indeed feel that we deserve the wrath of Almighty God? Do we feel this not only on some particular occasions, but, as it were, daily and hourly? Is the consciousness of it wrought into us and become the habit of our minds, so that we can find no peace but in crying unto God, and pleading with him the merits of his dear Son? Is Christ, in this view, "precious" to our souls? \* Is HE "our wisdom, HE our righteousness, HE our sanctification, HE our complete redemption?"† Having nothing in ourselves, do we make HIM our "all in all?"‡ Are we at the same time "renewed in the spirit of our minds?" Do we hate not sin, merely as it is destructive, but as it is defiling, to the soul? Do

\* 1 Pet. ii. 7.

† 1 Cor. i. 30.

‡ Col. iii. 11.

we account "the service of God to be perfect freedom;" and instead of wishing his law reduced to the standard of our practice, do we desire to have our practice raised to the standard of his law? Is it our labour to "shine as lights in a dark world," and "to shew forth in our own conduct the *virtues* of him that has called us?"\* Let us all put these questions to ourselves; and they will soon shew us what we are. If this be not the state of our souls, we are in an awful condition indeed. Our very best services have been nothing but a solemn mockery: in our prayers we have insulted rather than worshipped, the Majesty of Heaven: we have come before our God "with a lie in our right hand;"† O that it might please God to discover to us the heinousness of our guilt; and that we might all be "pricked to the heart," ere it be too late! Let us, the very next time we attempt to use this prayer take notice of the frame of our minds: let us mark the awful incongruity between our professions and our actual experience: and let a sense of our hypocrisy lead us to repentance. Thus shall the returning seasons of worship be attended with a double advantage to our souls: in praying for what we ought to seek, we shall be stirred up to seek, it in good earnest; and through the tender mercy of our God we shall attain the experience of those things, which too many of us, it is to be feared have hitherto hypocritically asked and ignorantly condemned.

\*1. Pet. ii. 9.

Isaiah xliv. 20.

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